The Dissertation Committee for Brandi Leanne DeMont certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

FINDING THE THIRD SPACE: A CASE STUDY OF DEVELOPING MULTIPLE LITERACIES IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONVERSATION CLASS

Committee:

_____
Diane Schallert, Co-Supervisor

_____
Janet Swaffar, Co-Supervisor

_____
Adria Frizzi

_____
Elaine Horwitz

_____
Zena Moore

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by

BRANDI LEANNE DeMONT, B.A.; M.A.

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For my students
yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

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FINDING THE THIRD SPACE: A CASE STUDY OF DEVELOPING MULTIPLE LITERACIES IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONVERSATION CLASS

Brandi Leanne DeMont, Ph.D.

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Supervisors: Diane Schallert, Janet Swaffar

The present inquiry is a qualitative case study of conversations and attitudes of students participating in a non-required, second-year conversation section offered as a voluntary adjunct to required second year courses in Italian. The findings in this dissertation support calls by policy makers in foreign language education who advocate for a more integrated and holistic approach to foreign language education. Through this empirical qualitative case study, I have used the construct of Third Space (Gutiérrez, 2008) to examine students' development of multiple literacies (Swaffar & Arens, 2005) in a foreign language conversation-based classroom. The theory of Third Space is seen as a kind of authentic intersubjective space, where students' ways of knowing and learning are accepted and expanded in the learning environment.

The study describes the results from the implementation of a language pedagogy based on the model of multiple literacies in an Italian conversation class. Students in the

class read and viewed a wide variety of authentic materials, around which they anchored their class discussions. Through activities involving multiple readings of the given text, the students co-constructed their interpretations based on personal experiences and on the socio-cultural background of the text. Students also engaged in self-reflective exercises documenting their own learning processes.

Through interpretive analysis of student work produced in the class, the ecology of learner developments and the corresponding classroom talk are assessed. I have identified three major themes that are evident as essential elements to the students' developing trans-linguistic proficiency in conjunction with their evolving cultural literacy. In particular, self-reflection and identity, expanded practices of knowing and learning, and the influence of semiotic mediation on classroom interactions are the three elements that define how these students articulated their Third Space in conjunction with this particular language learning context.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation reports on a study of university foreign language students in a class dealing with the way Italian films present the culture and discourses of Italy. The course drew on the curricular model of foreign language learning based on developing multiple literacies set forth by Janet Swaffar and Katharine Arens (2005), and the goal of the course was to facilitate comprehension of meaning structures in various genres across various discourses. The study reported here describes the reactions and perceptions of a small group of students enrolled in this semester-long Italian conversation course. Kris Gutiérrez' construct of Third Space (2008) provides the theoretical framework for the interpretation of the students' experience in the conversation class.

Language Learning Goals Set Forth by Policy Makers

The last quarter century has seen an increased emphasis on the importance of teaching culture in the foreign (FL) or second language (SL) classroom.[1] The National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (2006, hereafter, the Standards) explicitly identified *culture* as one of the five goals of FL learning. As the Standards explained, "the term *culture* is generally understood to include the philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and the products—both tangible and

[1] Although there are overall curricular emphases that differ among the populations of foreign language (FL) and second language (SL) students, the discussions throughout this study are applicable to both student groups.

intangible—of a society" (p. 43). The "products and practices" perspective of culture is seen to take a more modern view than the traditional big *C* versus little *c* notion of culture (Seelye, 1968), which is essentially high culture versus popular culture.

Upon reflection, these definitions are not so different from each other and are ultimately based on cultural facts that could be "learned". What these notions of teaching culture ignore is the fundamentally interdependent nature of language, culture, and meaning. They overlook the need for students to learn strategies for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning and representation that are culturally bound by sociohistorical and linguistic contexts.

A definition of culture that comes closer to the way it will be treated in this study comes from Claire Kramsch (1998), who stated, "culture can be defined as membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings" (p. 10). The notion of history plays an important role in this definition. She explained that the "diachronic view of culture focuses on the way in which a social group represents itself and others through its material productions over time—its technological achievements, its monuments, its works of art, its popular culture—that punctuate the development of its historical identity" (pp. 7-8). This view offers a more nuanced and sociohistorically sensitive treatment of culture.

Positing that reading print texts and reading visual media involve similar processing, Swaffar and Arens (2005) have developed a theoretical and procedural approach to classroom practices that enables students to draw inferences about and interpret different social behaviors and discourses depicted in a variety of foreign

language media. The authors propose that language proficiency involves awareness of how different genres and the text's specific historical, geographical, and social contexts alter language use. They see a central goal of language study as acquisition of "multiple literacies" in a foreign language. The scholarly treatment of the term *literacies*, particularly as it relates to the present study, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. For now *multiple literacies* can be defined as the ability to identify and interpret "systems of social behavior and knowledge that reveal culture-specific functions" (Swaffar & Arens, 2005, p. 40). To be multiply literate in a foreign language, students must be able to see patterns of messages within cultural contexts of communication and behavior and to manage these patterns and their implications across various situations.

In the 2007 report published in May, "Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World," the Modern Language Association's Executive Council called for an integrated foreign language curriculum that includes content courses from a wide variety of disciplines. The report stated that the "standard configuration of university foreign language curricula, in which a two- or three-year language sequence feeds into a set of core courses primarily focused on canonical literature, … represents a narrow model" (p. 2). Such a program creates a division between the language and the literature curricula, leading to disparate and un-articulated expectations for students as they move through the entire foreign language sequence.

During the first two years of the postsecondary language sequence, students are often asked to describe themselves, their families, their surroundings, their lifestyles, and their hopes and goals for their futures. Upon entering the upper division courses based

primarily on the literary canon, students are expected to engage in thorough critical analyses of literary texts from the foreign culture. This could be a difficult enough task in one's native language if the student has not had training and practice in textual analysis and interpretation. Even more difficult is to do so in a foreign language, about a foreign text, while trying to employ the linguistic capabilities and cultural sophistication of a native speaker of the L2. Add to this difficulty the lack of time or emphasis given to the students to develop self-awareness of their own learning behaviors, and the result is an incoherent program of work that fails to meet the goals set forth by the foreign language education policy makers. Short of complete curricular reform, which has been suggested by the MLA report among other scholars (Swaffar & Arens, 2005; Kern, 2005; Schwoch, White, & Reilly, 1992; Kramsch, 1989), one possible solution to this problem is to offer a bridge course in which students begin to learn analytical and interpretive skills through the practice of reading a text for meaning while remaining faithful to the macro-structures as well as the morphosyntactic features of authentic texts.

Although the policy makers are calling for an integrated and more holistic curriculum for teaching foreign languages, very little systematic work has been conducted in identifying procedures for the implementation of such a curriculum. Despite this, many applied linguists have begun to create and implement curricula and courses that include a wide variety of content, multimodal texts, and numerous exercises around those texts that can lead to a more holistic approach to language learning. Individual accounts via course and departmental websites show that holistic and integrated courses either in the L2 or regarding the C2 are taking place around the

country. (See, for example, http://www.utexas.edu/courses/arens/warfilmgenmwf/index.html and http://www1.georgetown.edu/departments/german/programs/undergraduate/curriculum/) However, even with these individual efforts toward a holistic and content-based foreign language curriculum, the reports on the systematic execution of such courses and the rationale behind the decisions are virtually non-existent in the literature. The problem, then, that this dissertation addressed is the lack of research in foreign and second language education detailing what students learn and how they learn it in a content-based and text-rich foreign language class designed to develop multiple cultural literacies. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I will discuss my personal history that led to the execution of this study, elaborate briefly on the theoretical background of the research problem, and provide a short overview of the present study.

Personal Narrative

In this section I describe how I came to the decision to study ways to increase students' multiple literacies in a foreign language course.

Differing epistemologies. At the university in which I was teaching during the execution of this study, the students who follow the sequence of the first four semesters of language study, as is required for most majors at the university, receive little instruction in content other than the morphosyntactic and phonological structures of the Italian language. The curriculum and all course materials for the four semesters are chosen by the supervisor and implemented by several teachers teaching the multiple

sections of these courses. Because several sections of the same course are taught each semester, a degree of standardization in the curriculum is necessary. The chosen curriculum focuses on the formation of grammatical structures, acquisition of approximately 4,000 lexical items per year, and accuracy in pronunciation. The themes of discussion and/or essays are dictated by the given chapter in the textbook, and these mainly consider topics of daily goings on in Italy, such as shopping, dining and cooking, entertainment, giving and receiving directions, and describing the visual concrete world. Assessments typically take the form of discrete point exams and short compositions. In short, the curriculum is based largely on a grammar-translation approach, though couched in the framework of communicative language learning.

Students take the one-credit conversation course, the focus of this study, as an optional supplement to their third semester in the four-semester language sequence. The course does not have a textbook, and instead students must attend the screenings of the film series selected each semester by a member of the departmental faculty. Because the films change each semester, so too do the details of the course design for the conversation course. For this reason, and, because the course is elective, teachers have a greater degree of freedom in designing its class activities than they do when teaching a course in the four-semester required sequence. Consequently, for this study, I was able to incorporate a variety of authentic texts in the class, including news and magazine articles, poems, film reviews, web logs (blogs), and other internet-based videos, in addition to the required films. The activities chosen for these texts were designed to elicit authentic communication among the students.

Personal philosophies. My personal beliefs regarding language learning and teaching are based largely on the socioconstructivist approach to language learning. The main tenets of such an approach include collaborative tasks, peer interaction, textually mediated learning tasks, and dynamic assessment. I have had little opportunity to implement such an approach to teaching in the core language courses due to the standardization of the curriculum. However, in the conversation course, which I have had several opportunities to teach, I have tried to put into practice a teaching approach guided by socioconstructivism. For example, one semester, I had students work collaboratively on task-based assignments, such as short-term research projects that resulted in a class presentation, or the use of portfolios whose assessment criteria the students and I negotiated together, representing a more dynamic and student-centered form of assessment.

Impetus for the present study. After several semesters of teaching the conversation course, I began to take notice of the anecdotal evidence I was collecting from my students. At the end of each semester, several students from the conversation class I taught mentioned to me that the course had proven to be more useful to their language learning than the core language courses. The comments typically were not more specific than that, and students simply said that they learned much more than they would have expected and that they felt they had greatly improved in their language use, without having to study grammar and vocabulary for hours each day.

I began to have the feeling that I needed to investigate why I was receiving these comments semester after semester. Once I read Swaffar and Arens' (2005) work on the

multiple literacies approach to language teaching, I discovered that I had already been using many of the features of that approach, though not as precisely or consistently as the authors described. I also realized that those features were not present in the core language curriculum. I knew then that I wanted to investigate what it was that students were learning from the conversation course that they were not learning in their core language courses, and why they felt that it was so important to their language learning experience. Furthermore, I became quite invested in the idea of deepening my own self-awareness and improvement as a teacher through teacher research. I wanted to integrate further the theoretical background to learning that I believed in with my own practices in the classroom. The conversation class was just the place. Therefore, it has been my goal in conducting this study to answer this general question: What kinds of theoretical and practical issues are relevant in a holistic language curriculum aiming to promote multiple literacies?

Considering the paucity of research addressing the curricular innovations suggested by the major policy makers in FLE (Modern Language Association, 2007; Standards, 2006), I implemented the present investigation to explore how students respond to a curriculum that favors an integrated and holistic approach to teaching interdisciplinary content and culture through a variety of authentic texts in the foreign language class. As the foregoing discussion of MLA and Standards policy proposals indicates, such a project reflects current thinking about curricular development.

Theoretical Background to the Research Problem

The call for the transformation of academic programs toward the integration of language into other disciplines and that of various disciplines into language study has at its core goal the development of translingual and transcultural competence (Modern Language Association, 2007). A more integrated notion than that represented by *bilingualism* or *biculturalism*, the prefix *trans-* implies a movement between, and an ability to operate fluidly within different languages, cultures, and discourses. Students should be "trained to reflect on the world and themselves through the lens of another language and culture" (Modern Language Association, 2007, p. 4). In doing so, they learn to comprehend speakers of another language as members of specific discourse communities. Moreover, they begin to see *themselves* as members of a specific discourse community, and to this end the students do not "otherize" the foreign culture without also considering different perspectives on their own subject positions.

The MLA Executive Council recommends incorporating cultural inquiry at all levels of language learning in order to achieve translingualism, or what is referred to in the European framework for foreign language education, *intercultural literacy* (Pegrum, 2008). The council presented certain goals that students should be capable of when reading a cultural narrative, for example. Among these goals is included the ability to:

> understand how a particular background reality is reestablished on a daily basis through cultural subsystems such as: the mass media, literary and artistic works as projection and investigation of a nation's self-understanding … stereotypes … as they are developed and negotiated through texts… (Modern Language Association, 2007, pp. 4-5).

What this goal indicates is that, though an integral part of the focus of learning about a foreign culture, the products of that culture are not at the forefront. Rather, they are the medium or the venue through which the students may investigate systems of cultural representation. In other words, language programs should situate language study within cultural, historical, geographic, and cross-cultural contexts so that students may learn to analyze the different voices and messages of individual texts as products and symbolic representations of the target culture addressing different audiences within that culture.

One of the important strategies in the goal of multiple literacies, or translingualism and transculturalism, is the inclusion in the classroom of a wide variety of texts, particularly those from outside the traditional literary canon. The rate at which authentic texts can be produced and consumed across borders—oceanic, technological, linguistic, temporal—is staggering, particularly when trying to stay abreast of the latest developments within a textual genre: television or print news, popular magazines, television shows, social networking websites, film, radio, and so on. Members of modern societies are inundated daily with hundreds of texts, broadly defined here as a meaningful collection of signs—written, visual, or audio. To make sense of these texts, readers, or consumers, need to be able to analyze, interpret, and categorize them in ways that are useful and meaningful for target audiences (in Italy and the U.S.).

Echoing the need for curricular reform in higher education, media studies scholars Schwoch et al. (1992) argued for the inclusion of the systematic and critical analysis of non-canonical media texts in all disciplines of the Humanities. These authors claimed that meaning-making happens at all levels of reading of all genres of text. Even as

viewers sit in front of the television and watch with divided attention, they are, in effect, learning cultural representations, and consequently, they need to be able to identify the producers of these representations and their potential meanings or interpretations.

In conjunction with the MLA's call for an integrated approach to language learning is the growing need for responsible global awareness about communicative modalities. This policy objective recognizes the contemporary goals for many students choosing to study foreign languages. Many students wish to travel or work abroad, and today's ever-increasing facility of exchange across physical, virtual, and linguistic borders calls for a greater ability and proficiency of individuals to understand multiple literacies and engage in communicative acts that reflect this awareness.

With their use of a wide variety of new media texts, such as blogs, wikis, and other modalities that promote social networking, such as Facebook, students have developed a desire to utilize these new textual modes to express their personal insights. Teachers and policy makers are beginning to recognize and honor this need of the students by including activities in the class that make use of such new textual formats as a venue for using the foreign language.

As has become increasingly evident in research (Scott, 2010), learning only a language's morphology, syntax, lexicon, and phonology no longer suffices to prepare one to explore the diverse discourse communities available in venues such as the World Wide Web, cinema, or television. It is not enough to use new media texts in the classroom for comprehension and production of the linguistic aspects of the language. Rather, one must also have some grasp of the given textual genre's (and culture's) functional

grammars (Halliday, 1985), as well as the various discourses (Gee, 1990; Foucault, 1972; Bakhtin, 1981, 1986, 1990) that are at play in the subcultures of that community.

Swaffar and Arens (2005) have proposed that the earlier in the language-learning curriculum this kind of cultural and textual inquiry can take place, the better equipped the students will be to engage in meaningful communication with members and/or texts of the target discourse community. To do so, students require ample opportunity to read and produce texts across a variety of genres so that they may become more fully cognizant of the linguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge they do possess.

Pedagogical approach to address the research problem. Although a body of research exists that points to useful tasks and assessment measures for reading print texts (Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991; Bernhardt, 1983a), little data exist about how to teach films, videos, and internet use for more than vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, or cultural facts. Swaffar and Vlatten (1997) provided a procedural model for video viewing in the FL classroom for the purpose of identifying and analyzing visual and audio content for the underlying cultural messages. Chapter 2 of this dissertation directly addresses the research that has been conducted in the area of teaching culture and using video texts to teach culture in the foreign language class.

THE STUDY

Overview of Research Design

The research study conducted for this dissertation is a qualitative case-study that describes and explains how students came to conceptualize and do the work of language

learning through their participation in a course that met two hours per week and was designed to increase their multiple cultural literacies. The students read and viewed a wide variety of Italian media texts, with feature films anchoring the direction of the class discussions. The study is not an intervention study; rather it is a descriptive and interpretive look at what students learned and how they interacted in such a course, and what about the course design contributed to the interactions that took place.

The logistics of the implementation of a semester-long course with the goal of integrating language and culture into meaningful discussion has not been made obvious by prior classroom research in FLE. This study is an attempt at looking systematically at one such endeavor. The details of the course and research design will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Research Questions

The two research questions that guided data collection and analysis are as follows:

In a foreign language conversation class modeled on a curriculum of multiple literacies, what happens in regards to:

- students' responses to the class activities, and
- students' perceptions about L2 language learning and culture learning.

Significance of Study

The aim of this study is to contribute to and to start a dialogue within the field of applied linguistics about how students respond intellectually and personally to a

curricular innovation. This study is exploratory in that few prior studies have looked empirically at the implementation of a multiple literacies approach to learning about the multiple manifestations of a foreign culture.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of theoretical and empirical developments in the following areas: 1) various social and linguistic theories on the notion of culture as a socially constructed phenomenon; 2) the development of the contemporary construct of multiple literacies; 3) the discussion of a conceptual framework of Third Space; and 4) empirical studies in foreign language classroom practices of teaching culture and teaching through video. Each of these sections provides the framework from which I attempted to answer the question: what does it mean to teach culture in the foreign language class through a multiple literacies approach?

Co-Construction of Meaning

The present study addresses various aspects of the co-construction of meaning, its ecology in the classroom, and ways to explore student identity in a foreign language conversation class. The pedagogical design and the theoretical framework for the data analysis are both grounded in a sociocultural theoretical perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) that emphasizes collaboration, mediation, and internalization in human learning. In this study, for the design of both the pedagogical approach to the class under examination and the analysis of the data, I drew from many different frameworks of cultural studies and language learning, all of which speak to the tenets of sociocultural theory in some way.

Social construction of cultural meaning. Cultural studies is an inherently interdisciplinary academic field in the pursuit of studying cultural phenomena in various societies. It comprises disciplines such as philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, literary criticism, media criticism, communications studies, museum studies, history, political economy, and sociology. Cultural studies researchers often focus on a phenomenon and how it relates to socially created constructs such as gender, nationality, ethnicity, class, and identity. The essential questions in cultural studies revolve around the representation of culture—how to distinguish between national, group, artistic, political, and social cultures and their mores. Although cultural studies scholars employ their areas of expertise to attempt to create theories about the concept of culture and cultural phenomena, perhaps no answer will ever be found to the satisfaction of all. What is not debated among these scholars, however, is culture's multifaceted and complex nature.

For purposes of this study, I will define culture from the perceiver's point of view—as a system of meaning-making or representation. As the following discussion suggests, the study of culture has rarely been undertaken as a question of perception strategies. My operational definition needs to remain broad and inclusive so as to account not only for the myriad approaches to cultural studies, but for the processes the students engage in when they apply these approaches on an intuitive level, without conscious application of the sophisticated theories I turn to now.

I begin the overview of the theoretical debates in the study of culture with Stuart Hall's (1997) understanding of *representation* as the production of meaning through signs. Hall defined representation as "using language to say something meaningful

about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people," (p. 15). Representation connects meaning and language to culture through a constructionist approach of semiotics and discourse, which are two different systems of representation according to Hall.

The semiotic approach was introduced by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1960), and the American pragmatist Charles Pierce. An expansion of semiotic theory to cultural studies came from the Marxist and poststructuralist ideas of the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1972, 1980), who proposed that the cultural documents of a given time and place reveal its "episteme" or fundamental precepts and cultural characteristics. Such systems of representation, or "principles of organization," (Hall, 1997, p. 18) are structured in terms of similarity and difference and causal relations. These organizational relations cannot be selected at random; they must be planned based on systematic and verifiable features of texts, broadly defined. Systems of representation that are based on binary oppositions such as different/same or before/after can be problematic if not anchored in a cross-section of texts such as diverse media, historical accounts, testimonies, scientific papers, literatures, and art. In other words, binary oppositions are a starting point for examining more nuanced meanings and various discourses within a given text. I will now briefly illustrate how the cultural theorists apply specific approaches to assessing manifestations of culture.

The study of semiotics is the study of signs and signifying practices. Though they worked independently, Saussure and Pierce are considered to be the creators of the study

of semiotics, examining how certain structures (linguistic as well as visual) work to produce meaning.

Saussure argued that the relationship between a signifier (a word, for example) and the signified (the concept that that word represents) is arbitrary. In terms of linguistic structures, he identified two layers of language use: *langue*, the formal structure of linguistics, and *parole*, what people actually say. The relationship between the two is arbitrary, and meaning making relies on understanding the differences between signifiers and signifieds. For example, in the context of a traffic light, the signifier *green* does not carry within the meaning of green-ness. Rather it is the difference between *green* and *red* that communicates the meaning of green-ness.

Charles Pierce, who worked on semiotics in the context of pragmatism, also addressed the concept of signs. Meaning and understanding, according to Pierce, involve interpretation of signs; our interpretations are guided and limited by iconic signs (visual signs) and indexical signs (linguistic signs). Iconic signs bear, in their form, a certain resemblance to the object, person, or event to which they refer. A photograph of a tree, for example, reproduces the actual visual perception of a tree. The word *tree*, however, does not look like a tree, and so to interpret the form *tree* as the meaning of a tree one must be familiar with the conceptual map offered by the form *tree*. A different conceptual map or linguistic code could offer *albero*, *baum*, or *arbre* as the indexical sign for tree. One would have to be familiar with that code to understand the intended meaning.

Some critics of Saussure claimed that his analysis of sign systems focused too much on the signifier and the signified at the expense of examining the relationship between the two, and subsequently *how* meaning is made. Roland Barthes used Saussure's linguistic analysis and applied it to a wide array of objects, activities, and texts. Barthes examined how the relationship of signifier and signified is stabilized by working together to create a "myth" (1972) or an iconic (to borrow from Pierce) representation of a cultural phenomenon. Analyzing a situation at both the descriptive or denotative level as well as the more nuanced or connotative level, Barthes showed through a systematic approach how meanings are fixed to objects or activities, such as fashion and its display or the functions of the Eiffel Tower, in order to identify consistent cultural patterns.

Social construction of discourse. Barthes' notion of systems of representation as a source for social knowledge is reflected in the poststructuralist work of Michel Foucault (1972, 1980). Foucault, like Saussure, Barthes, and other scholars during the decades after WWII, viewed cultural representation as a socially constructed process. He expanded the study of signs by identifying the discourses that evolved in systems of representation. In many fields, the term *discourse* refers to a linguistic usage, but in the Foucauldian sense it refers to the rules and practices that produce meaningful statements and regulate systems of meaning in specific historical periods (see, for example, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, 1972). Foucault explored the production of knowledge that resulted from these practices. In other words, instead of focusing on the distinction between language and its referent as did Saussure, or on the sign systems that are created

by the whole domain of a text or activity as did Barthes, Foucault focused on the ways in which the topic is constructed in the resultant discourse, and he sought to understand the history and evolution of cultural constructs that were considered normal (e.g., justice, intellect, and sexuality).

The semiotic approach as discussed above has remained at the level of the way words function as signs in language. However, cultural meaning often depends on much larger units of analysis, such as narratives, groups of images, or entire discourses that operate across a variety of texts. The model of representation that focused on the broader unit analysis of discourse is what allowed Foucault to examine issues of knowledge and power (1980).[2]

Much importance is also given to Bakhtin (1981, 1990) and his view of the essentially dialogic nature of every utterance, spoken, written, or even thought. Bakhtin, like the other scholars mentioned above, engaged in literary analyses that focused on socio-cultural communication, its intentionality and language, and the interconnectedness of the two. The notion of intertextuality is important here (Fiske, 1987; Searle, 1969). Much as in a conversation between two interlocutors, where one person's statement is a response to and inspires a response by the other, texts are constituted by the echoes of other texts they create and invoke. Bakhtin illustrated how discourses question and answer one another not only within a text but also across texts, and across textual forms (a film adaptation of a short story, for example).

[2] For a more complete examination of Foucault's work in the issues of knowledge and power see his works from 1972, 1977a, 1978, 1980. See also Hall, 1997.

Not only did Bakhtin aver that an utterance is a response to previous utterances and the precursor to utterances to come—its "dialogic" function. He also placed importance on the multivocality of any utterance or text. He interpreted texts as collages of discourses, even contradictory ones. Like Barthes, Bakhtin suggested that all communicative acts consist of interwoven voices. The presence of numerous voices or discourses within a single text is what ensures the primacy of context over the linguistic form. Within any genre one can find a number of discourses that are constructed to send different messages, depending on the audience's goals and needs for their interaction with that particular text. In other words, the meaning of utterances and judgments about their linguistic functions change with the sender, the receiver, and the circumstances of production and consumption of the text.

> Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated, overpopulated—with the intentions of others…Language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have a "taste" of a profession, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. (1981, pp. 273-4)

Seen in this way, language cannot be considered neutral, because it is caught up in political, social, religious, economic, and cultural structures.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as conceptualized by Fairclough (1989, 1995), is a form of textual analysis that brings together the Foucauldian social theory of discourse with the linguistic theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1973; 1978; 1985; Halliday & Hasan, 1989). SFL posits that every interaction can be understood at three levels: textually, interpersonally, and situated within a wider social

context. As language users, we choose from what is available to us linguistically in order to construct dialogue and meaning. For both CDA and SFL, language is viewed as a social construction that influences and is influenced by the context in which it occurs.

The Place for Cultural and Discursive Theories in the Foreign Language Classroom

These social, linguistic, and cultural theories have, since the advent of poststructuralism, become the informing theories in literary criticism, television and film studies, and new media studies. However, few scholars in these fields have offered systematic approaches to *teaching* culture. Moreover, although culture is a topic of increasing importance for foreign or second language educators and researchers, few guidelines exist for foreign language classes that aim to teach culture. Most FL or SL classes that attempt to teach culture result in increasing the students' knowledge base of cultural facts rather than awareness and articulation of multiple representations of cultural phenomena or the implications of those representations. The type of culture referred to in the traditional notion of big *C* and little *c* culture, high and popular culture, products and practices, are generally taught as "typical" rather than as part of a dialogic system. So the question remains: What does it mean to teach culture in the foreign language class through a multiple literacies approach that utilizes the theoretical insights of co-construction of knowledge *and* cultural theory?

Byrnes (cited in Swaffar & Arens, 2005, p. 162) has stressed that the kind of literacy that is prioritized in a multiple literacies approach has its foundations in cultural studies and requires the "creation of an intellectual foundation" for learning about a culture. Swaffar and Arens' (2005) pedagogical approach to language learning does

provide suggestions for clear developmental stages of teaching cultural studies theories in the foreign language class so that the students may learn how to expand their "intellectual foundation" by learning how to identify and interpret various discourses and cultural representations. The authors claim that through the class activities and discussions of notions such as iconic and indexical signs, discourses, and intertextuality, students begin to develop cultural literacy, an integral part of their evolving multiple literacies.

As long ago as 1938, Louise M. Rosenblatt's treatise on the phenomenology of reading emphasized the need for reform in education that incorporates what today is called holistic learning, "learning that [attends] to linguistic, conceptual, and communicative frameworks in tandem" (Swaffar & Arens, 2005, p. 29). Rosenblatt proposed that reading literature is an activity that should acknowledge first the reader's personal and unique experience with the text. She reported that students who are encouraged to interact with the text initially from a personal perspective are then better able to engage in critical analysis of the text. However, in order to analyze a text, a reader must remain faithful to that text. "He [*sic*] must be alert to the clues concerning character and motive present in the text" (p. 11). Although a reader's own assumptions can provide a tentative framework for interpretation, the work of the reader must not stop at the personal. As Rosenblatt and Bakhtin concomitantly suggested, readers (or viewers and listeners) must reexamine the text for clues within the cultural and discursive contexts from and for which the text was produced. In this way the reader's interpretation will be both personally intimate and textually based. Consequently,

Rosenblatt saw this kind of interpretive work as leading to an emotional and personal investment in the text in conjunction with the act of reading.

Like Bakhtin, Rosenblatt's work was largely undervalued in her time, but it has enjoyed numerous reissues, a testament to the equal importance of her contributions for the Humanities today. Particularly in the fields of Foreign Language Education (FLE), Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Language Arts, and Applied Linguistics, terms such as *literacy* and *multiliteracies* are receiving considerable attention. Each scholar's treatment speaks to the need to include cultural studies theories in education.

James Gee is one of the pioneers of the interdisciplinary field of New Literacy Studies, which is founded on the collapse of what he explained as the traditional view of literacy—the ability to read and write— that "rips literacy out of its socio-cultural contexts and treats it as an asocial cognitive skill with little or nothing to do with human relationships," (1990, p. 46). This traditional view supposedly constitutes the divide between "oral cultures" and "literate cultures." Gee attributed this divide to a faulty understanding of the presupposition that the ability to read and write is what constitutes a more highly evolved and complex society with more fully advanced cognitive capacities. Gee argued that this notion of literacy fails, as literacy cannot be separated from its social contexts. He deconstructed the dichotomous relationship of oral versus literate culture to reveal literacy to be dependent on complex sets of social practices, thereby leading to the notion of "literacies."

Cultural literacy. In the last two decades, other foreign language educators have added their voices to Rosenblatt's cry for a reexamination of literacy and the literary in

education, focusing in particular on cultural literacy. Mueller (1991) argued that students need to be made aware of how systems of interpretation are historically created and how they vary over time and place. Berman (1996) called for a "foreign cultural literacy" that examines texts beyond the traditional canon, such as films, song, visual art, and political discourse. Kern and Schultz's (2005) use of the terms "literacy" and "literary" are examined specifically to highlight the importance of interpretation and examination of the connections of linguistic form to the cultural and socio-historical contexts in which the work was produced—a cognitive ability that includes but reaches beyond the ability to read and write for morphosyntactic accuracy. Further, they, like Berman, advocate for the inclusion of multimodal forms of communication for both language comprehension and language production.

In conjunction with the policies of Foreign Language Education (FLE) as mentioned in Chapter 1 of this proposal, Kern (2002) explained how language departments can reconcile the division between lower division language courses and upper division literature courses through literacy. Whereas the goals of a functional ability to communicate everyday needs in interpersonal contexts and those of analytical proficiency are not in and of themselves incompatible, Kern argued that the epistemological background for such language-related goals are dissonant, and that the way to reconcile this gap in articulation is to reframe the textual as inherently communicative, thus providing a bridge from the lower division goals of personal and interpersonal interaction to the upper division goals of the ability to read, discuss, think, and write critically about texts (see also Swaffar & Arens, 2005, Chp. 3).

A curriculum involving interpersonal communication about the macrostructures of texts puts both types of language use at the forefront of the classroom goals, marrying the two. Kern argued for more analytical work in the beginning levels of language learning and for more open-ended communication to continue on into the advanced levels of language learning in order to result in greater language proficiency. Additionally, at all levels of language curriculum, Kern suggested there be more discussion and exploration of the multifaceted nature of language and communication. Although certainly not the first or only scholar to do so, Kern is an important figure in the reconceptualization of the term "literacy" to mean "a variable collection of dynamic cultural processes" (p. 3), rather than simply the ability to decode text for meaning and to write words in a prescribed way in order to produce meaning, hence the inextricable nature of literacy and culture.

In addressing practices enabling multiple literacies in the curriculum, Swaffar and Arens' *Remapping the Foreign Language Curriculum* (2005) argued that a focus on linguistic form without a simultaneous consideration of the semiotic, pragmatic, and cultural contexts of the text is insufficient to define *literacies*. Furthermore, like Rosenblatt, the authors advocated authorizing students to interpret and identify meaning, so long as they substantiate their findings with a textual reference. In other words, students need not search for the instructors' answers. There are only answers that can be validated by one's interpretation of the information in the text. To interpret their findings, the students learn strategies of textual analysis with tasks that ask them to read

texts as sources of information about social phenomena, such as class, gender, race, and nationality, to identify textual examples of discursive systems.

Kern and Schultz (2005) viewed this shift toward multiple literacies as important also in the world of research. Viewing language learning from a text-based perspective requires researchers in FLE or SLA to account for the various contexts at play in the reading of a text. This type of inquiry lends itself to qualitative research, in which the researcher attempts to understand and interpret a phenomenon from the point of view of the research participants. In the case of this dissertation, I have described the students' experiences of learning to interpret and speak Italian through a multimodal text-based curriculum in order to determine how the learning context and the interactions I encouraged in the classroom resulted in development of their cultural literacies and their expression of those literacies.

Third Space

Expanding one's horizons of what it can mean to learn, and in particular to learn a foreign language, can be seen as entering into a Third Space. Although not necessarily a goal for FL learning, it appears to be an inevitable part of the process of developing FL proficiency. The term (and similar terms, such as *third culture*, Kramsch, 1993) has been used by a number of scholars in slightly different ways.

Many scholars have viewed *third space* as a coming together of the "first" and "second" spaces—a hybrid space. Generally, the "first" and "second" spaces refer to the learner's L1 and L2 cultures respectively. Directly addressing language learning in a

classroom setting, Kramsch (1993) described the "third culture" of the language classroom—a neutral space that learners can create and use to explore and reflect on their own and the target culture and language. However, considering the discussion above of the non-neutrality of language use, this notion of third space is problematic for the present study. Coming from the perspective of postcolonial discourse, Homi Bhabha (1994) characterized *third space* as a hybrid space with clear cultural and linguistic implications. For Bhabha, the third space is produced through language and cultural practice as people come together to resist a cultural authority. In so doing, individuals bring different experiences and new meanings to bear on the same linguistic signs and cultural symbols. The hybrid nature of this process can be an asset or a hindrance to one's own cultural practices and identity formation. In other words, the creation of a third space can be freeing and empowering, and at the same time it can set the individual apart from those who represent power or authority.

Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, and Collazo (2004) defined *third space* as an integration of "knowledges and Discourses" that are drawn from different spaces in society (Moje et al. borrow the capital D from Gee's (1990) treatment of discourse/Discourse). *Third space* for these authors is also a hybrid or merging of the "first" and "second" space. The first space (home, community, peer networks) and the second space (the Discourses of work, school, church, and other more formalized institutions) are combined to form a new, third space. For Moje and her associates, it is important to understand the "funds" in which the different knowledges and Discourses are generated in order to make their social construction visible. These authors discussed

third space as integral to scaffolding young students' development of content literacy skills.

Third Space in education. Gutiérrez (2008) compared the Third Space to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Gutiérrez capitalizes the term *Third Space*, as I will throughout the remainder of this study). She explained that the notion of the ZPD was useful for understanding how she came to conceptualize the Third Space over time, as the Third Space meets several basic criteria of the ZPD. First, in the Third Space there is a reorganization of everyday concepts into scientific or academic concepts (Vygotsky, 1978). This involves bringing one's outside knowledges and discourses into the classroom setting and using them as a resource to construct meaning on an academic level. Second, the activities in the educational setting are significant to the learner's potential development. Learning happens in consideration of the level of the students' interest, goals, and knowledge about the topic. The flow of topics and activities cannot be fixed in such a setting; rather, the learner's developing skills and interests are the driving force of the curriculum (van Lier, 2008). Finally, in the Third Space, development is accounted for as the transformation of the individual, of the social environment, and of the relation between the two. The learner and the environment are mutually informing, and each "seeks to actively change the other to their own ends" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 153).

Gutiérrez and her colleagues (1995) explained that

> as members of a community interact within and across events, they construct normative patterns of life within a classroom. These scripts, characterized by particular social, spatial, and language patterns, are resources that members use to interpret the activity of others and to guide

> their own participations. A script, then, represents an orientation that members come to expect after repeated interactions in contexts constructed both locally and over time. (p. 449)

In other words, students become socialized into ways of being students in particular classroom settings. Each class will inevitably privilege certain ways of knowing and learning over others.

The process of the individual's and the environment's influencing one another is reminiscent of Gee's (1990) description of Discourse, with a capital D, as "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network,' or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'" (p. 143). In other words, becoming a member of a community of practice is a process of developing a particular way of behaving and participating in that community. Through participation in the sociocultural practices of that community, members learn which discourses and forms of participation are valued and which are not.

To recognize the valued forms of participation in a classroom, it is necessary to recognize the productive and unproductive aspects of a learning cycle. And to find the productive and unproductive aspects of a learning cycle, it is necessary to focus on all the elements of the learning environment that contribute to the learner's processes of reconstructing what it means to be a learner. The use of the word *space* in all the above conceptualizations of Third Space brings with it the idea of physical space and setting. Van Lier's (1996; 2004) work on foreign language learning placed a strong emphasis on environment and ecology's role in language use and acquisition. The ecology of

language learning, van Lier argued, is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that includes all of its complexity, looking at language as a tool for many uses, and as a key component of all human meaning-making activity. Although van Lier did not discuss the notion of Third Space in any way, his ecological approach to the study of language learning is complimentary with Gutiérrez' definition of Third Space in educational settings. For both authors, learners have goals that they wish to accomplish, and they use the resources available to them in the learning environment to find new ways of accomplishing those goals.

In her work, Gutiérrez moved beyond the hybrid nature of Third Space as discussed above (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Alvarez, & Chiu,1999; Gutiérrez, 2008). She conceptualized Third Space as the peripheral place where individuals excluded from or outside the mainstream culture can learn to function successfully in that culture. The population of her research largely comprised ESL children of migrant workers. In her sense, the first space is that of the learners and their background. She identified the second space as the mainstream classroom's academic content and discourses. The Third Space would be created when the classroom becomes learner-centered, thereby validating the students' ways of knowing and enabling students whose first-space experience lacks ready access to the performance objectives of the second space—either because of their educational background, their self-perception, or the dominant culture's apparent rejection of their potential—to perform successfully in the second space.

In her most recent work (2008), Gutiérrez moved beyond the notion of scaffolding, defining Third Space as a "transformative space where the potential for an expanded form of learning and the development of new knowledge are heightened" (p. 152). She went on to explain that focusing on and examining productive and unproductive aspects of learning cycles has helped her to identify the "processes that lead to learning—that is, processes marked by new forms of participation and activity that change both the individual and the practice, as well as their mutual relation" (p. 152).

Unlike Gutiérrez' participant population, the participants in this dissertation are not members of a marginalized culture in their first space. They are middle- to upper-class university students who speak English as their native language and who have more than adequate proficiency in academic discourse; they are considered part of mainstream society. However, their enrollment in the conversation course of this case study points to their desire for an alternative learning experience to those offered by the mainstream culture of language classes at the university—the second space. As such, it is within the institution of the university that they have perhaps experienced a rejection of their performance potential due to the particular discourses and forms of participation that are valued in the mainstream FL curriculum.

The focus of the construct of Third Space as it is used in this dissertation is on the learning environment and the change that occurs within. Productive learning is constituted through interaction and negotiation with others and with the self in the learning moment, leading to change and the creation of a Third Space. This ecological view of Third Space is the approach I used in the present study. Drawing from Gutiérrez'

(2008) notion of Third Space, and on van Lier's (1996; 2004) discussions of ecology and foreign language learning, I identified the features contributing to the complexity of learning moments that contributed to or hindered robust learning cycles, and I examined how manifestations of these cycles contributed to the students' awareness and negotiation of what it means to be a language learner.

Research on the Teaching of Culture in the Classroom

As already noted, in this study I taught Italian culture through the examination of a variety of Italian media texts intended for consumption in Italy by an Italian audience. The discussion of theories germane to cultural studies described the basis for my operational definition of culture used in the present study and in a curriculum designed to enable students to discover systems by which cultural meaning is made.

Caveats regarding research on culture. As I have already indicated, a body of research exists that studies the teaching of culture in foreign language classrooms as the learning of factual information. Rather than examining culture as a complete system of meaning and representation, culture in these studies is typically viewed as a function of language acquisition, the ability to recognize or reproduce the language associated with daily life, little *c*, or "practices," with facts or generalizations identifiable in cultural accomplishments, big *C*, or "products." Studies have also examined the increases in listening comprehension through exposure to videos depicting cultural phenomena (Rubin, 1990; Secules, Herron & Tomasello, 1992).

Some studies have examined comprehension and retention of cultural facts. In particular Martinez-Gibson, (1998) reported that FL students were able to recognize cultural content of FL commercials when combined with a discussion about the video. Kitajima and Lyman-Hagar (1998) studied the effect of using a 1-minute silent video to teach Japanese cultural information. The students were able to perceive cultural information from the clip, suggesting that the visual aspect alone can be read for cultural content. This is an intriguing study, but silent video alone does not address deeper and essential explorations of the relationship of linguistic to visual information.

Adair-Hauck, Willingham-McLain, and Youngs (2000) assessed the effectiveness of technology to improve students' cultural knowledge. Through a technology-enriched language learning (TELL) program, the students were exposed to an instructional video that accompanied the language textbook. The findings showed no significant gain in cultural knowledge over the semester. Herron and her associates (Herron, Dubreil, Corrie, & Cole, 2002; Herron, York, Cole, & Linden, 1998) have conducted studies examining the effectiveness of advanced organizers (AO) with video-based activities in elementary FL classes. These studies have shown that there is an overall gain in the learning of cultural facts over the course of a semester, though the use of AOs does not always provide a significant increase in gain scores.

One study in particular by Herron and her associates (2002) examined intermediate level French students in a pretest/posttest design to assess the long-term gains in cultural knowledge through a video component of the class. The video used was an accompaniment to the language textbook, and all journalistic in nature. The average

video length was 6 minutes, and in most cases a native French speaker was interviewed regarding some aspect of French culture. Results of the study showed that the intermediate-level college French students did improve their knowledge of the material presented as representing French culture over the course of a semester through the video viewings. However, Herron et al. found no significant difference in the type of culture learned (i.e., practice or product). Although this study contributes to the relatively small body of studies on intermediate-level students, it does not provide indices about what students learn from viewing a video. Furthermore, the pedagogical design did not include teacher or student interaction regarding the video. Consequently, this approach to assessing the use of multimodal texts in the classroom cannot address students' learning processes or their understanding of the interconnected nature of language and culture.

To be sure, studies exist that examine a more integrated notion of language learning and culture. Three in particular have informed my study design. Wright (2000) investigated the application of the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) to measure the effects of two different ways of teaching culture to beginning level American students of German. An L1 process-oriented approach and an L2 knowledge-based approach were implemented in separate classes, and the CCAI was administered as a pre- and posttest. The results were analyzed quantitatively and showed that the process-oriented group experienced significantly positive results on the CCAI. Although relevant for this study in the implications of a process-oriented approach to cultural learning as opposed to memorization of facts, Wright's research does not examine the relationship of language to culture, as the process-oriented group discussed cultural issues in the L1.

The second study by Scott and Huntington (2002) analyzed a one-day treatment in a first-semester French course to examine the effects of different presentations about French culture. Like Wright's study above, this research compared attitudes of students across two different groups; the first read a fact sheet in French about Côte d'Ivoire and the second group read a poem in French about Côte d'Ivoire. Although both texts were in French in this study, the nature of the cognitive processes employed were different, the first group being required to memorize facts and the second being asked to interpret the poem and connect it to its cultural implications. This study showed that the literary text contributed to the students' affective awareness and cognitive flexibility, and the students were therefore more inclined to consider French culture from the perspective of the native speakers of French from the Côte d'Ivoire. These findings have intriguing implications for the connections among language, text, and culture, but they do not address long-term gains in the cognitive processing ability of the students over an extended period of time. In their discussion of suggestions for future research, the authors recommended a close study of classroom dynamics during the presentation and discussion of a literary text. They also recommended an analysis of classroom discourse as well as a "qualitative, case-study approach to analyzing the effect of a literary text on subjects' affective awareness and cognitive flexibility" (p. 628).

The third study is a dissertation report by Hammer (2008) that explored students' gains in cultural literacy through several viewings of a German television program. The comparative study comprised four separate intermediate-level German language classes. Through qualitative and quantitative methods, Hammer examined how the FL learners'

viewing of episodes from the television program changed learners' perceptions and attitudes about the target culture over the course of the semester. Her findings derive primarily from comparing students' essays in which they wrote about features in the video they viewed as characteristic indications about German culture. Among other intriguing findings regarding the use of authentic video in the FL class, Hammer found that students increased their ability to analyze and discuss critically, in both written and oral formats, the cultural practices represented in the episodes.

How my study differs. As this brief review of the empirical foundations suggests, scant FL research exists that provides findings about how or whether authentic interactions around cultural materials affect the development and synthesis of language and cultural knowledge. The study I have conducted differed from those mentioned above in various ways. First, few scholars in FLE have looked at the use of video to explore the semiotic and discursive concepts of culture. The studies that have incorporated video to accompany a grammar textbook have focused on language acquisition issues such as vocabulary retention and listening comprehension. In addition, many studies examining the use of video have used only one generic type, such as a feature film, instructional video series, or journalistic interviews. My study incorporated use of a variety of genres, such as feature films, television programs, journalistic interviews, cinema industry interviews, written film reviews, excerpts from novels, and several other genres of both visual and written text to accompany each filmic text. In counter distinction to other studies, I collected and analyzed data over an entire semester. Finally, I explored not only how students' conceptual knowledge of Italian culture and

their perceptions of themselves as language learners changed over the course of the semester, but also how the total environment of the learning context contributed to (or hindered) their classroom interactions.

Research on teaching through video has often looked at cultural facts that can be extracted from the text, how much cultural information students are able to retain at the end of a semester, student attitudes toward a second culture (C2), vocabulary acquisition, or listening comprehension. My study examined a class that taught not cultural facts that could be gleaned from the video texts, but rather strategies and theories of viewing and reading that students applied to the texts so that they could interpret cultural facts based on socio-historical, situational, and personal contexts.

Another important way in which my study differed from those that describe learning culture in a foreign language classroom is that I looked closely at the interactions that took place in class around the texts, noting how different activities and different levels of cognitive knowledge contributed to or hindered authentic L2 interactions among the students. Education researchers have long used discourse analysis as a means to make sense of the ways in which people make meaning in educational contexts (Gumperz, 1982; Labov, 1972; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1976; Cazden, 1988/2001). Early scholars of classroom discourses coded teachers' and students' utterances in classroom talk to examine the micro-interactions of the educational setting. Conversation analysts, for example, closely examine utterances within an interaction, yet they often do not turn to social and cultural theory to make broader sense of the micro-interactions, focusing instead on what is present in the moment. On the other hand, scholars from sociology

and cultural studies have looked to classrooms to theorize about the ways in which social structures are reproduced in educational environments. However, these scholars often do not conduct a close analysis of the micro-interactions. My study is an attempt to bridge the two, in the sense of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1989; 1995). In other words, it is one of the goals of the study to interpret and explain the ways in which classroom discourse and the social world were mutually informing, simultaneously creating and representing each other.

Conclusion

As demonstrated by this brief introduction to the literature, despite ongoing interest and repeated calls from scholars of various disciplines for research, little work has been done to document and analyze how students' conceptual knowledge and perceptions about a foreign culture can change when they participate in a holistic pedagogy, such as the one proposed by Swaffar and Arens' (2005) curricular model of multiple literacies, and its impact on the classroom discourse.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This dissertation seeks to understand the research participants' experiences of their own processes and progression in translinguistic and transcultural proficiency through a multiple literacies pedagogical approach. The aspects I specifically address are the classroom interactions and how the pedagogical approach and the ecology of the classroom contributed to those interactions. The previous two chapters explain how I conceptualized and executed the study, examining both the theoretical and empirical contexts that informed the present inquiry. This chapter explains the methodology behind the exploration of whether insights about the impact of an innovative course design reveal tentative answers to the questions posed in this study:

In a foreign language conversation class modeled on a curriculum of multiple literacies, what happens in regards to:

- students' response to the class activities, and
- students' perceptions about L2 language learning and culture learning.

In this chapter I will first describe the appropriateness of a qualitative case study design. Next I will move to a description of the research setting and participants. I will then describe the data collection tools and how each relates to one or more of the research questions. I will explain the data analysis techniques I used and how they relate to the study's trustworthiness and transferability as well as the ethical questions raised by the

assumptions and procedures used in this study. I conclude with a discussion of my own positionality as a teacher researcher in regard to those questions.

Qualitative Research

A natural fit emerges with a qualitative case study employing interpretive research methods to explore curricular innovation and the students' reactions to and processing of the course curriculum. According to Merriam (1998), "[q]ualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meanings people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world," (p. 6). To explore the processes of meaning construction, this case investigates and documents the implementation of a new curriculum and the students' reactions to and experiences with it, using case study methodology and its related techniques as the research framework.

Yin (1994) defines case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident," (p. 13). In Yin's view, the reciprocal nature of the phenomenon being studied and the context within which the phenomenon is found render these two notions inseparable; the phenomenon in a different environment would be a different phenomenon.

It is the sense of this covalent relationship that Merriam defines case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit," (p. 27), focusing on the end product of the study, rather than the interconnectedness

of research issues addressed and the context created to address them. Providing a variant on the notion of covalency between research issue and the context of investigation, Miles and Huberman (1994) view a case study as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context," (p. 25). Here the focus is on the boundaries that delimit where the context begins and ends.

Despite different emphases in their definitions, most education scholars agree that a case study involves qualitative investigation tools such as fieldwork, observation, interviews, and document analysis. Each definition cited above can be applied to this dissertation study. The phenomenon of study is the students' experiences of a curricular innovation. The qualitative methods applied serve to provide the emic perspective—categorizing and interpreting data produced by the people studied. The physical and temporal boundaries of the context are unambiguous—anything and everything that took place in the classroom at any point in the term of the course are subject to inquiry.

This case study is grounded in a constructionist and interpretivist notion of qualitative research. Michael Crotty (2003) defines social constructionism as "the view that *all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context*," (p. 42; emphasis in original). In other words, meaning is not discovered but rather socially constructed, as the name would suggest.

My second research question explores the students' individual and collective experience of the curricular innovation; as such, the students themselves were the creators of this experience. As the teacher I had my part in contributing to the social context in which meaning of a phenomenon was made. The materials and texts that I provided were a factor in what kind of experience the students had, and the students also created and contributed materials and interpretations to the class as a whole. The examination of what took place throughout the curriculum's execution inherently involves looking at how the individuals constructed a collective understanding of the experience.

Of course there are individual differences in the students' experiences, but both the research questions and the curriculum itself were designed to allow these individual differences to come together and reveal themselves in the class. This double layer of individual meaning-making contributing to the collective consciousness shows that not only does each individual work to construct a collective experience of the curriculum, that was the context of this case study, but that the curriculum was designed so that the record of each student's work help the researcher construct a collective interpretation of how the students experienced the class.

Research Design

As noted above, the study employs interpretive qualitative case study as the research design, defined by Merriam as, "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon," (p. xiii) and the boundedness of the context is an important

characteristic of case study research. This study is bounded by several different contexts, which must be considered in discussing the transferability of the results. Some of these boundaries include the timeframe of the data collection period, the language background of the students, the group of students themselves, the physical space of the classroom, and the course curriculum. Through qualitative research the resulting interconnectedness of each of these contexts is uncovered. Further details on each of these aspects will now be expanded.

Participants and setting

The participants of the present study were ten students who were enrolled in a lower-division conversation course in Italian at The University of Texas. Their pseudonyms, in alphabetical order, were: Alessandro (M), Amalia (F), Bianca (F), Claudio (M), Cristina (F), Gianluca (M), Lucia (F), Paolo (M), Tiziana (F), and Tommaso (M). (I have provided their gender here to prevent any confusion based on the spelling of their Italian pseudonyms). At the university, students enroll in this class as an ancillary course to improve conversational skills in Italian as a foreign language. Most students enroll in the course concurrently with the third semester in the four-semester, lower-division core language sequence. The first two semesters of the Italian language sequence at this university are based on a normative lexical and syntactical approach to language learning. Upon beginning the course of the present study, the students had been exposed to all sixteen verb tenses and conjugations, all rules governing the use of accusatives and prepositional accusatives, and approximately 4,000 lexical items.

The majority of the participants of this study were in their final year of Italian studies of their college career, though a few students did go on to subsequent courses, and still fewer went on to major or minor in Italian. The conversation course is not a required course for any major at this university; all students enroll voluntarily. Students received one credit-hour for the course, and the class met twice per week for fifty minutes each meeting.

The demographic makeup of the course was relatively homogeneous. Eight of the ten participants were undergraduate students in the process of fulfilling their university language requirements. Lucia, the ninth participant, was a graduate student of Spanish and Portuguese linguistics. Tiziana, the tenth participant, was a non-traditional student auditing the class for personal interest in Italian language and culture. Alessandro and Amalia, two of the undergraduate participants, were heritage speakers of Spanish. Finally, one undergraduate participant, Gianluca, was of Italian heritage, though his former exposure to the Italian language was very limited prior to beginning his studies at the university. All but two participants were undergraduate students between nineteen and twenty-two years of age. Of the ten students enrolled in the class, all ten chose to participate, and only one, Amalia, chose not to have her Italian utterances quoted directly; her contributions in Italian are paraphrased in this document. Complete participation has allowed for the analysis and discussion of the findings to be truly representative of the class as a whole.

I was also a participant in this study. As the teacher of the course, my role was a participant observer. I am an American of Italian ancestry, though I did not grow up

speaking Italian. I began studying the language during my undergraduate years at the University of Kansas. At the time this study was conducted I had been studying and speaking Italian for twelve years and teaching Italian to undergraduate students in American universities for six years.

Context of participants' language-learning histories

To contextualize further the decisions that I made in designing the course for this case study as well as the analysis of the data in Chapter 4, it is important to understand the educational context and the students' second-language and Italian-learning histories prior to and concurrent with participation in the conversation class. I will first describe in detail the expected learning outcomes, assessment tasks, and respective freedoms and restraints for teachers and students alike of the first four semesters of the lower-division sequence. I will follow with a brief description of those same issues as they relate to the ancillary conversation course—the site for this study. A detailed description of a sample lesson plan for each day of the film unit will be provided in Chapter 4 to provide the context for the discussion of the individual speech events that took place in the class.

Intended learning outcomes. The first two years of the lower-division undergraduate Italian language sequence at the university constituted a standardized grammar-translation approach to language learning. The first two semesters of the Italian language sequence at this university were based on a normative lexical and syntactical approach to language learning. Students were exposed to each of the four verbal moods and sixteen verb tenses and conjugations, all rules governing the use of accusatives and prepositional accusatives, and approximately 4,000 lexical items. The first year of the

two-year sequence is designed so that each chapter of the textbook highlights two to three specific grammatical concepts that are illustrated through isolated examples using vocabulary from the chapter's theme. Little material from other chapters makes an appearance in the given chapter, leading to a compartmentalized representation of the language and themes from daily life, such as dining, school, entertainment, the natural environment, and politics.

The second year of the sequence generally follows the normative lexical and syntactical approach to learning, with a more refined treatment of complex morphosyntactic elements as well as additional lexical items. Instead of the textbook, and therefore the syllabus, being organized around grammar, however, the chapters are divided by one of seven communicative functions, called *i punti chiave*, or "key points". These include describing, comparing, narrating in the past, recommending, expressing opinions, hypothesizing, and talking about the future. Although the first year highlights the grammatical forms of the target language, the focus of the second year is, theoretically, on the function of syntax in language use. Each *punto chiave* makes at least an appearance in each chapter, giving the impression that each communicative function is important no matter the content of the communicative event; nonetheless, each chapter of the textbook is focused on only one or two of the *punti chiave*.

As in many large universities across the U.S., the course descriptions for the four core language courses at this university advertise a communicative approach to language instruction. Canale and Swaine (1980) introduced the notion of communicative competence as a response to the more behaviorist and innatist views of language learning.

They claim that grammatical competence is only one of four language competencies; the other three are sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse competence. In this view, grammar can be viewed as one skill of language learning, much as teachers and scholars today think of reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Scott, 2010). This theoretical view of communicative language learning has failed to make it into many FL classrooms today. Instead, many instructors still focus mostly on grammatical competence, even if they may claim a communicative language approach. This is problematic, as it may lead students to believe that the study of abstract grammatical structures alone will lead to communicative competence in the target language. Indeed, for the students of this study, the four semesters of the core language sequence had failed to address sociolinguistic, strategic, or discourse competencies. Students had not generally been given the opportunity to discuss, either in the L1 or the L2, difficult concepts that fall outside the realm of structural linguistics.

There is uncertainty about what it means exactly to be "competent." The content of what is taught at elementary and intermediate levels of study has not changed since the behaviorist approach to language learning (Scott, 2010). Familiar topics such as food, clothing, and leisure activities are still at the heart of what students learn. Furthermore, these topics are often considered to fulfill the language course's cultural content. Swaffar (2006) points out the shortcomings of current models of communicative language teaching in the following way:

> the pedagogy of communicative competence still reflects the strong structuralist learning of its audiolingual predecessors—it focuses on student recall of information rather than on analysis of that information … without content and analytical thinking applied to that content, language

> competence, no matter how communicative, remains essentially self-referential. (pp. 247-249).

Types of assessments. At the time of the study (and continuing today), students in both years of the two year language sequence were assessed primarily on their ability to complete discrete point grammar exercises such as fill-in-the-blanks and translations. In addition, the standardized exams included an aural component consisting of dictations and listening comprehension questions. Finally, students in both years were assessed twice per semester on an in-class presentation addressing a cultural fact, generally related to a specific geographical region of Italy. Only in the second year were students required to write short compositions of one to two pages in length. They were assigned three short compositions per semester during their second year of language study. The grading criteria included mastery of syntax and lexical items as well as the overall organization and creativity of the composition. Each quiz, exam, class presentation, and composition (second-year only) was weighted a certain percentage of the total class grade. In addition, there was a class participation and attendance component of the students' class grade. These assessment practices reflect the mainstream—or first space—approach to language learning. Other areas of student performance, such as Canale and Swain's (1980) sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse competence, were not assessed in such an instructional system.

Credit toward major. Approximately half of the students enrolled in Italian for the first two years of the sequence were taking the course to fulfill the two-year language requirement dictated by their college at the university. The other half of the student

population comprised graduate or continuing education students (who often audited the class in lieu of enrolling directly), or undergraduate students who had decided to take Italian as an elective. Most of this latter population had Italian heritage that inspired them to take Italian, as opposed to any other language, as an elective course. Although completion of the first two years, or demonstration of equivalent knowledge of Italian language, were prerequisites for upper division coursework, these four semesters did not count toward hours completed for the Italian major or minor degree.

Freedoms and restraints for teachers and students alike. As Leo van Lier (1996) stated, "the purpose of a curriculum is to guide the processes of teaching and learning. It can do this in quite explicit, controlling ways, or in more subtle, flexible ways. In the former case, external control may cause curriculum and pedagogical needs to drift apart…" (p. 6). Too much external control has the potential consequence of education ceasing to exist, as the students are held to homogenous standards without considering their personal histories. Too little control has the potential consequence of a chaotic environment in which learning cannot occur. One must find the right balance.

From the point of view of a language educator whose teaching goals are to promote lifelong learning, to encourage students to find their own balance between knowledge and values, and to increase their multiple literacies, I found that the restraints dominated the freedoms within the system of language education espoused in the 2-year sequence at this university. In particular, students were not permitted access to their L1 in class in order to discuss or contemplate difficult concepts, whether about the linguistic structure of Italian or about sociolinguistic, pragmatic, or textual questions regarding the

L2. Furthermore, these classes lack a variety of authentic materials that would provide the students with the opportunity to examine language use and make inferences about the target culture based on the specific use of language in that text. It is important to clarify that I am simply illustrating that the type of course objectives that the two-year sequence espouses did not match my own objectives for beginning level language students.

The syllabus for the four required semesters in the Italian curriculum specified in a comprehensive manner a number of materials, discussions, and activities. Consequently, individual teachers had few opportunities to develop alternative pedagogies or to accommodate students' interests in communication and exploration of their objectives in learning the language. The consistent focus on grammatical and lexical accuracy, even at the very beginning levels, also tended to limit class activities in all four semesters to those drills that reinforce the grammar forms under review at the time. In such a structure, the students are denied access to their L1 to engage in complex thought about abstract ideas, and they lack the kind of authentic materials that could give them the opportunity to substantiate their interpretations of the culture of the target language—both important aspects of defining a Third Space.

Assessment practices reflected the focus on grammatical accuracy. For minor mistakes in spelling, agreement, and the like, discrete point quizzes and exams were graded down to one quarter point. Not until the second year in the program were compositions assessed for their organization of the language, their discussion of relevant information for the essay's prompt, and their creativity. Nevertheless, here too students were held to high standards of grammatical and lexical precision.

Overall, then, the pedagogies and syllabus for these courses set strong boundaries on the types of activities and content to be examined in class. The textbook was in many cases the only text used in the class. Any materials aside from the textbook (and its accompanying ancillary materials) were provided by the teacher at her/his discretion. Some teachers found this approach a freeing one, as they were not required to create a lesson plan for each day; the lessons essentially created themselves based on the pages to be covered in the text.

As stated earlier, I had serious doubts about this approach to language instruction. I found it difficult to create meaningful class activities without including outside materials that reflected students' interests and that could be incorporated into the existing structure as dictated by the syllabus for negotiation with the students. Consequently, after several years working within the program set forth for the core language courses, I welcomed the opportunity to develop and research a course intended to afford students with the opportunity to explore aspects of Italian culture that they felt is important about language learning.

Central elements of the conversation course

Intended learning outcomes. As its name indicates, Practice in Spoken Italian was designed to improve the students' conversational skills in Italian. As their teacher, my aim for the students was that they become more confident in their capability of making their voices heard and in communicating their ideas to a group of Italian speakers, whether native or not native. On the basis of films viewed and related textual documents, I wanted the class to experience and practice textually anchored free

expression. In other words, rather than commenting solely on their personal opinions and fact recall, as is often the case in the first two years of language learning, I encouraged my students to support their comments and interpretations about Italy and Italian culture by applying information from the text at hand. The films viewed and the related texts we used and created in class were the only forms of shared knowledge among all students.

Due to the standardized format of language learning adopted by the core language courses and the focus on the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—cultural competence as an L2 skill had not been a priority. Given the emerging significance of cultural literacy in foreign language pedagogy, I hoped to construct a course that would provide the students with ways to explore Italian culture as a dynamic way of thinking about unfamiliar as well as familiar practices, behaviors, and values. In particular, I wanted them to begin to recognize the semiotics of different cultural groups within Italian society—the ability to recognize sign systems of different expectations about various activities across the range of human experience, such as war, mourning a lost friend, falling in love, managing a student-professor relationship, and making ends meet in a low-income environment. In sum, I intended for my students to learn how to use textually-based free expression to explore, interpret, and make inferences about the target culture based on the specifics of the language of the given text.

To help students become aware of their own processes of learning and perceiving Italian language and culture and film literacy, I designed activities that had them reflect on their own performance and thoughts throughout the semester so that they might continually look ahead toward their goals as language learners and look back at their

performance and behaviors to assess how they had gone about reaching those goals. In doing so, I hoped to create a sense of community in the classroom, where each individual was in part responsible for all other students' learning. In short, I allowed the use of the L1 to work through complex ideas, and I did not demand grammatical accuracy in the L2. These two factors allowed for a space in which students could focus on their thoughts and thought processes rather than on the final form taken by their language use. Furthermore, I provided authentic materials and designed authentic communicative activities around those materials so that the students could substantiate their evolving interpretations of cultural and discourse concepts, thereby enhancing their critical literacy.

Types of assessments. In this conversation class, much of the assessment was ongoing and generated by the students themselves. For any given assignment, I gave the ten students a certain number of points of out a total, based on completion and effort. I did not assess these students on their grammar, vocabulary, or spelling. Rather, I rewarded the content of their work and the thoroughness with which they appeared to have completed the assignment. Most students consistently received full credit on all assignments, which included online discussions in Italian of the films, in-class presentations about the film, in-class written and spoken assignments, and overall class participation.

However, more important than my assessment of their completion of assignments were their ongoing self-evaluations. Each student was required to write a one- to two-page self-assessment in English at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. They were to identify their goals for the course, their goals for learning Italian, and how they

went about reaching these goals. Additionally, the second and third assessments asked them to reflect on their participation in the course, using the audio recordings of the classes to help guide them in reflecting on their oral participation.

These assessment practices gave a voice to the individual student. I allowed the students initially to use their L1 to discuss difficult concepts until they became comfortable enough with the material itself. I expected of my students less grammatical accuracy and more demonstration of close observation of language use and critical analysis of text. Assessing the students on the carefulness of their articulation of their points of view communicated to them that I was interested in their developing this skill. Self-assessments allowed them to show me what they felt was important to them in their learning experience in the class. I was able to then use these assessments to help guide the curriculum so that we could work together to create the most thorough learning environment according to their needs, desires, and histories.

Credit toward major. The conversation course was only credited to the student as an elective credit, regardless of the student's major. It was not a required course, even for Italian majors. To enroll, students had to have successfully completed the first two semesters of Italian, or have demonstrated equivalent knowledge of the Italian language by way of a standardized placement exam. Students could also enroll in the course more than once, and they received one elective credit each time they enrolled in and completed the course.

Freedoms and restraints for teachers and students alike. The teacher researcher must distinguish between restraints that are intrinsic to the teaching/learning setting and

those artificial restraints that a particular system enforces on the setting. The former are informative restraints in that they direct the activities and are empowering for students and teachers alike. The latter are disempowering for students and teachers, as they merely control, stripping the members of the classroom community of their authority in how learning can take place.

Unlike the core language courses, the conversation class at this university was not strictly supervised. The only requirement for its teacher was that the conversation topics be based around the film series organized by a member of the Italian department faculty. As such, the restraints in the case of this class were intrinsic to the class itself, they were not imposed by an external agency. Practically speaking, the participants' communicative language proficiency was the first major restraint confronting the teacher. Exercises aimed at discussing Italian films needed also to accommodate students' very mixed and often low levels of linguistic proficiency. It was not possible to demand such a high level of morphosyntactic accuracy in such a course. Furthermore, given their language learning histories, the students had not had practice in discussing complex ideas about a foreign culture in either the L1 or the L2; their discourse proficiency was also at a beginner's level.

Second, the infrequent class meetings and short class times posed a restraint on how much conversation and interaction the students could engage in per week. The class met only twice per week for 50 minutes each lesson. Finally, lack of supervision and support in the form of materials and exercises from the departmental supervisors could be seen as a restraint, in that it was the sole responsibility of the teacher to create meaningful

and integrated activities that articulate the whole picture of the learning setting: the text (films), the setting, the number of students, and each students' educational background and goals.

However, what in one light could be seen as restraints on the teacher could also be seen as freedoms that the teachers and students are granted. Without strict supervision, the teachers and students had the opportunity to negotiate what kinds of activities were meaningful given the intended learning outcomes and the students' learning goals. Students had the authority and the space to contemplate their own principles for language learning, and to try to put those principles into practice by way of making those principles known. Further, without a textbook dictating the direction of the conversations, the content of the conversations were free to go in a number of directions. They were guided by the films, but without right or wrong answers, criteria, or standardized questions. Finally, without the insistence on grammatical accuracy (as noted in the restraints) students were free to play with the language and to practice using it in ways that were meaningful to them. Manifestations of the ways the resulting insights were expressed in student performance are presented in the analysis section of Chapter 4.

Sample Selection

Two layers of sample selection are important in qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998). The first is the selection of the case itself, and the second is the sample(s) within the case. In this study the case selected was a result of both purposeful and convenience sampling. It is purposeful in that my first research question is to understand how students

respond when a curriculum designed for multiple literacies is implemented in a conversation class using media texts. The case was the conversation class, each student, the classroom environment, and the time limit of a semester. This sample is also convenient in that there was only one section of the course that I studied, so whichever students enrolled in the course were asked to participate in the study.

The second layer of sample selection within the case can be defined as theoretical sampling (Merriam, 1998). Since I initially examined all aspects of the class as potentially significant for the study, the amount of data amassed would have been overwhelming for the scope of this study were I to have attempted to analyze it all.

Initially I had intended for the data analysis to be inductive and ongoing throughout data collection. However, due to restrictions from the Internal Review Board (IRB) I was obligated to wait until final class grades were submitted before I could ask the students for their consent to participate in the study. Therefore, rigorous data analysis was largely put on hold until the end of the semester. However, as the teacher of the class I could not help but notice certain categories revealing themselves in the various data sources. To uphold my contract with IRB I did not conduct any official data analysis while the class was ongoing. However, I did keep a teacher's journal, which was (and still is at the time of this report) part of my normal practice of mindful teaching for any class. The documentation of my impressions and feelings about the class helped lead me to develop criteria for selecting constructs to analyze upon the semester's end.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study occurred primarily during the Spring 2008 semester, with the exception of student interviews, which took place in February of the Spring 2009 semester. All data gathered from participant resources were collected for potential analysis with explicit permission from the participants and in full compliance with guidelines established by the IRB. Multiple data sources were collected in accordance with the well-established tradition of qualitative case study methodology. Data used in this dissertation is organized into three sets: 1) fieldwork; 2) content analysis of student work; and 3) student interviews. I will now provide further details on each data collection tool.

Table 3.1: Data collection tools

Fieldwork	Content analysis	Interviews
Daily classroom observations	Classroom conversations	Individual student interviews
Audio-recording of each class session, with transcripts	Content analysis of written in-class work	Member checks
Daily teacher-journal after each class session	Student self-assessments, 3 times throughout semester	

Fieldwork. The fieldwork conducted in this study consisted of class observations with transcripts and a daily teacher-journal. The class observations were audio-taped using a digital recorder that was placed in the center of the room. This collection tool served to document the overall classroom environment, the class activities and discussions, and the students' and teacher's reactions to what took place in each class. The configuration of our class was a circle, with the recorder in the center. When the

class was divided into small-group discussions, the recorder remained in the center of the room, and the microphone registered the loudest speakers among those in any given group. Any class or small group discussions that proved particularly revealing in terms of the study's research questions and the criteria developed to address them were transcribed and analyzed for content.

In addition to recording each class and listening to the recording soon after the class, I also made field notes in my teacher's journal after each class session. This journal was essentially a diary summarizing what happened in that class period and my overall experience of class that day, in relation to the days that had passed, and in relation to what I expected for the remaining days in the semester. I noted not only what I remembered from what happened in that class day, but also affective factors such as how I felt and how I perceived the class' reactions. This diary helped me to later identify moments that I felt should be analyzed after the completion of the semester.

The role of teacher-researcher forced me to be one or the other in certain contexts. In class, I assumed the role of a teacher, particularly necessary in light of the fact that I did not yet know whether all students would agree to participate in the study. In this way I felt I could safeguard myself against favoring any student or any activity for research purposes, potentially jeopardizing the students' educational experience. To augment the role as a teacher in the classroom, I kept a researcher's perspective in the teacher journal. This approach afforded me an opportunity to view my own actions and thoughts as a teacher from the perspective of a researcher and to help identify meaningful categories to explore upon the end of the semester.

Content analysis. Content analysis included analysis of a sampling from the body of the written and spoken work that the students produced, both in Italian (the L2) and in English. The content analysis looked for two different types of information; the students' progress in developing multiple literacies (largely cultural literacy and film literacy), and their experiential processing of the course as a whole, and of their role in the course.

To assess students' performance in cultural and film literacies in Italian, I analyzed their spoken and written work in that language to look for their comprehension of the interconnectedness of critical thinking, interpretation, and linguistic form. To analyze the students' processes of learning, I examined their periodic self- and class-assessment papers that they wrote in English as well as the final class evaluations. The primary documents that I used for this study were the student self-evaluations assigned at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester.

Interviews. One calendar year after the start of data collection, I interviewed the students who agreed to participate in the study. Participants were asked to comment on long-term effects or lasting impressions of the class. The interviews were semi-structured to elicit student elaboration on aspects of their work or discussions. The interviews served also as a member check for categories that I believed led to my analyses. In addition, I hoped that students' retrospective impressions might cast light on long-term effects of the class and their perceptions and behaviors as learners of Italian.

Significance of data collection tools

Each data collection tool contributed to the overall body of data that has served to answer the research questions. These specific data collection tools were chosen because

they complimented one another, and due to their complimentary nature, at times the data collected by two or more methods proved redundant. This redundancy contributed to the trustworthiness of the data; by triangulating the data sources I have been able to more accurately interpret the data during analysis. Below is a chart summarizing the specific reasons for choosing the collection tools that I chose for this study.

Table 3.2: Significance of data collection tools

Data source	What	When	How many	Why?
Documents	In-class assignments	Ongoing		To document the students' responses to the class activities
	Student self-evaluations (English)	Beginning of semester; mid semester; end of semester	3 per student	To document students' perceptions on their experiences of language and culture learning throughout the course
Fieldwork (observations)	Class and small group audio-recordings	Ongoing; each class day	29 days	To document the students' interactions and responses to the class structure and activities
	Teacher journal	Ongoing; immediately after each class	29 days	To document my own perceptions on students' responses to the day's activities. To document my perceptions

				on their progressive language and culture learning throughout the semester. To document the implementation of the curricular innovation.
Interviews	Individual interviews	One calendar year after the beginning of the case study	1 per student; 6 students interviewed	To document students' perceptions on their experiences of language and culture learning throughout the course

To answer my first research question—how students responded to the curricular innovation—I chose data sources that documented their in-class behaviors and interactions. The primary source to address this question was the in-class conversation, which was recorded daily with an audio recorder and then transcribed. The recorder documented whole class discussions as well as pieces of small-group discussions. The unit of analysis that I will discuss in Chapter 4 is the conversational interaction. In some instances the exchange is only two utterances between two people; in other instances the exchange is quite long with many participants taking part. I chose either to not use or to use in only isolated cases other data sources that were collected for the purposes of this study. These included in-class written work in Italian and online Blackboard discussions

that were assigned as homework. A secondary source for this question was the teacher journal that I kept daily after each lesson as discussed above.

To address the second research question—the students' perceptions of their experiences of language and culture learning throughout the class—I have chosen two of my primary data sources. The first is the tri-part self-assessment assignment in which the students discussed their goals for the course and how they believed they were going about reaching those goals at three stages in the course of the semester. The second source is the student interview, which took place approximately one calendar year after the beginning of data collection in the class. As noted above, these interviews allowed the students to elaborate on themes that were common among the self-assessments. They also served as a member check for my current analysis. First, throughout the interviews I asked the students to elaborate on statements they had made in their self-assessments or in class. I wanted to give them the opportunity to explain themselves to be sure that I had interpreted those statements correctly. As one of the final questions of the interview, I asked the students first a rather hypothetical question along the following lines: "If you were given my task of collecting all the information from the semester—the class recordings, the self-assessments, the Blackboard discussions—what discoveries do you think you would make?" Knowing that this was a difficult question, especially considering that a year had passed since we began our conversation class, I wanted first to see what their lasting impressions were of the class as a whole. This usually led to a conversation about what I was discovering in the analysis of the data, which will be discussed at length in Chapters 4 and 5. Of the six participants who agreed to interview

(four were unable to interview due to their schedules), all of them came to the same overall conclusion about the class: that it had become a class that taught them new ways to learn about Italian culture and about themselves.

Researcher Positionality

In any qualitative research study it is important for the researcher to disclose his or her various roles and viewpoints on the research problem, data analysis, and resultant discussions. I explain here my position as a teacher researcher and my personal philosophies of language learning and teaching.

Teacher research. What it means for teachers to do research in their classrooms has been a subject of debate since the movement began (Hubbard & Power, 1993; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992; Meier, 1997; Wells, 1994; Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). Some works emphasizes the necessarily local nature of the work, research that emphasizes the practices and issues of everyday life in the classrooms, in contrast to an outside observant who comes into the classroom with immediate and deliberate research commitments.

Some scholars (Hammersley, 1993; Huberman; 1996) claim that the intimate knowledge of the teacher researcher cannot be considered valid because, being so entrenched in the details of the class, they are unable to understand what is happening in a wider context. I believe that as a researcher studying my own class I have a greater ability to notice those details that might otherwise be ignored, and to consider how they might affect the findings of the data analysis.

I believe that due to university requirements and my research design, I approached a balance of both roles of teacher and researcher in this study. The IRB restriction of having to wait until the semester's completion before beginning in-depth data analysis kept me somewhat limited to my role in the classroom as strictly a teacher. However, the freedom to keep my daily journal allowed me to note details in students' behaviors and interactions that I could return to once I did begin the data analysis. Thus, my interpretations incorporate the detailed observations of a researcher in conjunction with my role as a teacher.

Personal philosophies. The interpretations that I offer in this study are certainly influenced by my personal philosophies of both teaching and learning as well as research. I came to see how a socioconstructivist approach to teaching foreign languages offers the students many possibilities to empower themselves as learners and to engage meaningfully with the material. I recognized that my role as a teacher was more as a facilitator and support for the students rather than as the giver of knowledge. The information to be learned is available to all students, and with the right guidance and help, they can learn to appropriate and construct meaning for themselves, creating the foundations for lifelong learning.

At the university of this case study site, I was a teacher in both the core language courses as well as the conversation course. The curricular structures framing these two learning sites are quite different. The conversation course, the site for this study, is a class in which the teachers and students have much freedom in how they approach the learning tasks. The only requirement is that the conversations be based on the movies

shown throughout the semester by the department. In this way, I have always had the freedom to put into practice my philosophies of teaching and learning, and I have learned from the semesters of practice what activities and approaches to content learning seem to work better than others.

In the core language courses, the learning method that frames the course design is based on what I view as a hybrid communicative and audio-lingual or grammar-translation method. Much of the focus is on students' drilling grammatical forms and vocabulary and translating phrases and paragraphs from English to Italian. In addition, there are some opportunities for the students to write and have conversations about their personal lives and opinions. The information they are responsible for learning is in the textbook and ancillary materials, and it is the responsibility of the instructor to be sure the students are sufficiently prepared to do well on discrete point examinations of the grammatical and lexical items presented in those materials.

Thankfully at this university, by offering both the core courses and the ancillary conversation course, the language department affords the opportunity to bridge the more structuralist courses to a course that is truly communicative. In teaching both of these courses simultaneously, I have found myself at times at odds with the structure of the core language courses, because I can see how students thrive personally and linguistically in certain activities in the conversation course that are not appropriate for the core language courses. To be sure, the core language courses provide a strong foundation for grammatical structures. However, with little opportunity to make those structures

meaningful in extended discourse, they are viewed by the students more as formulas rather than tools for communications.

As mentioned above, in previous semesters of teaching the conversation course, students shared with me their positive experience of the course. Some extraneous factors that may have contributed to the favorable experience may include the small class size (roughly a dozen students), the textual content of the course (feature film), and the grading criteria of the course (effort and progress as opposed to grammatical accuracy). It may also be the case that the students who choose to take the conversation course are self-selected; perhaps they are students who are looking for an alternative learning experience. I have no evidence of a conscious struggle against a mainstream agenda, as this was not a comparative study. However, one can assume that the participants of this study are exceptional in that they specifically sought an alternative to the mainstream language education. Regardless, through anecdotal evidence from students of past conversation courses, I learned that they gained a deeper understanding of the Italian language and culture and of themselves as language learners from the conversation class than from the core language courses. Thus, I set out to research why exactly that is the case.

My approach to studying this phenomenon is also influenced by my personal beliefs about educational research. While much has been learned from studies framed in a post-positivist research design, I do not believe that one can make generalizations about the overall effectiveness of a certain approach by isolating specific variables in a classroom setting. Classrooms are dynamic and multi-faceted, and it is my belief that all

of the variables of a given learning environment can have a profound effect on what and how students learn. Thus, for this study, I have taken an ecological approach to the research problem with the aim of illuminating what aspects of the pedagogical implementation the students found useful and how the environment affected their learning and growth.

Chapter 4

CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

In this chapter, I will discuss the results of my analysis of three data sources of a semester-long study describing the implementation of a multiple literacies-based course. The general research question guiding the analysis is as follows:

In a foreign language conversation class modeled on a curriculum of multiple literacies, what happens in regards to:

- students' response to the class activities, and
- students' perceptions about L2 language learning and culture learning.

Qualitative case study research generally amasses large amounts of raw data. Since the nature of qualitative research is inherently reflective, data analysis began on the first day of data collection. The research questions necessitated analysis of interconnecting features between successive days of the class.

My position as both a teacher and a researcher for this conversation class contributed to multiple perspectives in writing this analysis. During the time of teaching, what informed my classroom decisions were purely pedagogical issues. I put on my teacher's cap, and did not remove it until the semester's end. I approached each lesson with the course goals in mind, and my chosen activities were informed by the various educational philosophies discussed in Chapter 2. Each class was recorded for transcription, and I kept a teacher's journal at the end of each class day.

Only at the end of the semester did I put on my researcher's cap and began to organize and sort the data on the basis of patterns and foci in students' discourses and verbal interactions that suggested instances of co-construction of knowledge. In this sense, what informed my analytical decisions was separate from what informed pedagogical decisions. My focus in this chapter is on the resultant empirical analysis of classroom interactions between students and myself.

Three primary data sources were analyzed. First, transcriptions of the class conversations were used to look at students' interactions with me, with one another, and how the selected activities and texts seemed to encourage or hinder conversation. The second and third primary data sources, the student self- assessments and interviews, provided indices about students' perceptions of what was happening in the class and their attitudes about language and learning about Italian culture. In Chapter 5 I will discuss those data.

FINDING THE THIRD SPACE

In the description that follows, I borrow Gutiérrez's (2008) definition of Third Space as a way to describe the class as a whole as "a transformative space where the potential for an expanded form of learning and the development of new knowledge are heightened" (p. 152; see also my longer discussion in Chp. 2). I present the students' interactions and negotiations with others and with the self in order evaluate to what extent individual introspection and reflection about these interactions and negotiations then lead to a transformative space for both the individual and the learning environment.

CLASSROOM SETTINGS

To identify the ways in which a potentially transformative Third Space can be asserted in this study, I need to contextualize the case study site by comparing it to basic characteristics of the core language courses in which the students were concurrently participating. As was discussed in Chapter 3, the ways of knowing highlighted by the core language courses privileged memorization of grammar rules and translation of sentences from English (L1) to Italian (L2). Furthermore, the assessments in these core courses were designed on what can be called a deficit model: for each assignment points were deducted for mistakes made, representing a perfect score as the ideal standard. The nature of classroom interaction in the core language courses was largely scripted by the textbook. Students translated, read aloud from the textbook, and performed dialogues from the textbook. To be sure there were some instances of more spontaneous conversation in these classes, but they were minimal in relation to the rest of the classroom interactions. Furthermore, these unscripted conversations were often between teacher and student, not among students.

In the site for this case study, the ways of knowing and learning that were privileged involved conversations that explored ideas and language use, optional use of both L1 and L2 to discuss those ideas, and inclusion of non-canonical authentic texts used to generate authentic classroom talk. The classroom talk was created by all members of the class based on their experiences in class, with the texts, and outside of the class. With no textbook to script what students could or should say, the dialogue was

holistic to the text, to the students, and to the given learning moment. The learning activities were performed through varied participation structures and modalities of text, including small-group comprehension discussions, group presentations, listening to lectures, online group discussions, and whole class conversations.

Another difference between the courses was the role of the teacher. In the core language courses, the teacher was the authority, the keeper of knowledge who distributed what was to be learned as well as grades for how completely the students had learned it. On the other hand, I, as the teacher in the class of this study, encouraged the students to make their own interpretations of the materials we read and viewed, and insisted only that their interpretations be substantiated by the information in the text itself. In other words, there were no right or wrong responses, only responses that could be supported by the students' interactions with the text at hand. The grades that students received were based on an effortful completion of each given task, spoken, written, or otherwise. I chose not to focus on the students' linguistic proficiencies or deficiencies, but rather on the pedagogy's influences on their expanding repertoires of literacies and learning practices (Gutiérrez, 2008).

CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

Basis for selection of unit analysis. Interaction is a key element to a course design that is based on building and sharing knowledge to increase cultural and conversational literacy. Therefore, in this section I present my analysis of several moments of classroom talk throughout the semester. For each example, the data source is the class conversation

transcript. To illustrate the elements of the classroom environment that helped sustain small but robust cycles of learning, as well as those that did not, I organize these findings not diachronically, but rather by when they occurred in relation to an individual film unit, which was four days long. I provide a representative example for each of the four days designated in a film unit. In other words, I will provide a day-one example, then day-two, day-three, and day-four to exemplify the individual unit day and to portray a composite of what the whole unit looked like.

As described in the previous chapter, each unit in the case study class comprised four distinct stages in discussion the six films viewed outside of class. The first two lessons included pre-viewing activities. As each film presented different genres and subject matter, students at the beginning of each new unit had minimal continuity for discussion. As a result, these two days of conversation tended to be teacher-centered. Students heard short lectures about the historical and sociocultural contexts of the films, and they responded to teacher questions about their personal experiences related to the topic. The third and fourth class days, occurring as they did after the film had been viewed, involved a different format. For each unit, even for the very first film, the post-viewing lessons proved to be student-centered, with the students' engaging in less scripted discussions. They tended to interrupt each other more, to ask questions of each other (not just of me, the teacher), and to talk on task for longer periods both within their small groups and in whole-class discussions.

Now I will describe and discuss Day 1 of a film unit, which is to be read less as a Third Space and more as a possible necessary precursor to finding the Third

Space—given the time constraints, the students background limitations in terms of linguistic competency and content knowledge, and most importantly the cognitive demands of engaging in authentic conversation about critical analysis of a text.

Day 1

The first day of the four-day unit was dedicated to orienting the students to the historical and social parameters of the upcoming film. Because each film of the semester was of a different genre, and often represented different time periods, the objective of the first day of previewing was to help the students situate themselves in the film's various cultural contexts. Another objective was to help the students identify the generic conventions of the film and to explore their understandings of how those generic conventions operate to send a message.

After I either gave a short lecture or asked students about their prior knowledge of the social and historical context surrounding the film, we typically had multiple viewings of a scene from or related to the film for that unit. The lecture or question and answer session generally lasted ten minutes, and the topics often covered comparisons of phenomena, ideas, historical moments, or words and phrases from the L1 and L2. This served to lessen the cognitive overload in the beginning stages of learning, and to orient the student to the topic by way of what they already knew, (Swaffar & Arens, 2005). Then we moved on to viewing a clip from the film. I varied my choice of scene, from the opening scene, a scene within the film, or the official film trailer. Students were asked about their familiarity with the topic and encouraged to practice their filmic vocabulary,

and practice making plot predictions based the film's genre details of the scene, to that extent, an analytic task. However, only a short clip was used without revealing too much of the plot so that the students' interest would be sufficiently piqued by leaving many questions still unanswered.

Below is Table 4.1 showing the lesson plan for a day 1 activity from the third film of the semester. The activities shown here were typical for the first day of previewing a film. A more detailed explanation of the lesson plan will follow.

Table 4.1: Day 1 lesson objectives and activities

Lesson objective	Activity	Student actions
Warm-up	Silent viewing of opening scene of the film	Students view scene without audio and complete worksheet identifying the who, what, when, and where of the scene. Students share answers with a classmate, then with the whole class.
Making predictions	Second silent viewing	Students view scene again without audio and identify the camera angles and orientations as a way to predict how the characters are related to one another and to the story. I.e., who is the protagonist, the antagonist, etc. Students first share answers with a classmate, then with the whole class.
Confirming predictions	Third viewing, with audio	Students view the same scene with the soundtrack and confirm or disconfirm their predictions.
Attending to details	Fourth viewing, with audio	Students view for the fourth and final time the same scene paying close attention to the language that each character uses. From this, they make a final prediction about the characters' subject positions in

		the social and historical context of the film. For example, does the character seem to be erudite, a foreigner, superior or inferior to other characters, etc? This highlights the connection of how the same language is used differently by different groups.

As the table indicates, Day 1 was characterized by four comprehension tasks based on viewing a short clip (or clips) from the unit film.

Warm-up activity. The first warm-up activity for each film unit was designed to help students activate their background knowledge in order to speculate on some aspect of the film: genre, content, timeframe, etc. One of the most frequent ways of doing so was through silent viewing. I would choose a short clip from the film, usually no longer than five minutes, and we would watch this scene without audio in the class. I then asked students to fill in a matrix-style worksheet with increasingly more complex information at each viewing. During the first silent viewing, the students were asked to identify the concrete characteristics of the film: the who, what, when, and where. The précis (see appendices A1, A2, and A3 for example matrices) was designed so that not only were the students required to categorize these concrete details but also what visual aspects of the film led them to see what visual clues suggested that people were, for example, untrustworthy or deceived, rich or poor, in authority or in a subordinate position. I gave the students one to two minutes to write this information in the worksheet, then about one minute to share their responses with a neighbor. Finally, we spent about five minutes sharing with the entire class what the students wrote.

Making predictions. A second silent viewing immediately followed the first. The same scene was shown, still without audio. This time, however, students were asked to focus on the camera work and lighting, framing, staging of the scene, etc. in order to make a conjecture about the relationships of the characters to one another and to their environment. The students were asked to identify who they believed to be the protagonist and antagonist, and what details of cinematography led them to that conclusion. Again, a matrix-style worksheet was completed during and immediately after the viewing. Then, students had a minute to share their responses with each other and about five minutes to share with the entire class.

Confirming predictions. Now that students had made predictions about the who, what, when, and where of the film, as well as the relationships of the characters to one another and to their environment, they viewed the same scene a third time, now with audio. This activity allowed them the chance to confirm or disconfirm their predictions.

Attention to details. I showed the students a fourth and final viewing of the same scene, asking them to pay close attention to the language that each character used. They made notes about the diction, accents, speed, and tone of their language use and made further predictions about who the characters were, what place they had in society, what their conflicts were, etc. In this way, they could make some initial predictions about what the full-length film was about.

The excerpt

As mentioned above, the excerpt I provide is representative of the type of interactions typical of all Day 1s. I first turn to an excerpt from the twelfth class day,

which was day one of the third film unit for the semester. The first two preview days of the film unit were typically marked by less interaction among the students and less sustained conversation in the class as a whole. Indeed, that interactive pattern was characteristic of both the first and second days throughout the semester.

For the excerpt below, the students had been asked to review some essential L2 filmic vocabulary that we had discussed several weeks prior. To review this vocabulary (terms such as *close up, long shot, objective v. subjective framing,* etc.), I had the students watch the first 7 minutes of the film for that unit without the audio track. Given only the visual aspects of the scenes, the students' first task was to choose specific moments in the sequence and to identify its corresponding camera movements and framing perspectives.

I first provide the full transcript of the excerpt, with the translation, in order to provide a broader view of the nature of the interaction. Of particular interest to this discussion is that among the five total participants in the excerpt, there were only two interlocutors in a given exchange—one student and myself. Furthermore, it is evident from the transcription that I frequently call on students to participate, and their responses are almost always one line. I follow this transcription with more analytical commentary about specific exchanges within the excerpt.

Table 4.2: Day 1 transcription excerpt

Transcription	Translation
B*: All right let's stop here for this first round. Allora, che cosa avete scritto? Niente?*	**B**: All right let's stop here for this first round. So, what did you write? Nothing?
Gianluca*: Niente!*	**Gianluca**: Nothing!
Lucia*: Un uomo vecchio*	**Lucia**: An old man.
B: *Un uomo vecchio. E che movimenti*	**B**: An old man. And what movements
Lucia*: Il campo totale.*	**Lucia**: Full shot

B: *Campo totale. Quindi cosa dimostra nel campo totale?*	**B**: Full shot. So what is seen in the full shot?
Lucia: *Gli uomini, e vediamo piu' o meno tutto il corpo di questi uomini. E anche la stanza*	**Lucia**: The men, and we see more or less the whole body of these men. And also the room.
B: *E anche la camera la stanza. Bene? Altre cose?*	**B**: And also the room. good. What else?
Paolo: *un campo medio? Con tutti soldati? Solo medio del corpo.*	**Paolo**: A half shot? With all the soldiers? Only half the body.
B: *Si', un campo medio quindi, dalla vita in su. OK. Altre cose?*	**B**: Yes, a half shot, so, from the waist up. OK. What else?
Paolo: *Primo piano del uno uomo molto (inaudible – rango?)*	**Paolo**: Close-up of a very (inaudible) man.
B: *Dell'uomo vecchio di cui abbiamo parlato. Il primo piano, ok.*	**B**: Of the old man that we talked about. Close-up, OK.
[5 seconds silence]	
B: *Altre cose?*	**B**: What else?
Lucia: *Piange.*	**Lucia**: He's crying.
B: *Piange, si'.*	**B**: He's crying, yes.
Lucia: *Piangeva.*	**Lucia**: He was crying.
B: *Quando?*	**B**: When?
Lucia: *con il primo piano.*	**Lucia**: with the close-up.
B: *Ah! Ok, quindi quando c'era il primo piano piangeva*	**B**: Ah! OK, so when there was a close-up he was crying.
[Gianluca and Bianca talking]	
B: *Bene, altre cose? Amalia cos'hai scritto?*	**B**: Good. What else? Amalia, what did you write?
**Amalia said she saw men running below the houses, and the scene was a long shot.*	
B: *un campo lungo, quindi vedi gli uomini che fanno parte dell'azione ma vedi anche l'ambiente che e' in quel periodo cioe' in quel momento e' importante. E corrono sulle tette. No, sui tetti delle case. Tette is breasts. Tetti is roofs OK. Gotta make sure you make that gender distinction there. Bene. Altre cose?*	**B**: A long shot, so you see the men that are part of the action but you also see the surroundings that in that period, that is, in that moment, are important. And they're running on the breasts. No, the roofs. Tette is breasts. Tetti is roofs OK. Gotta make sure you make that gender distinction there. Good. What else?
Alessandro: *Campo medio la scena della tortura. Come dal dottore, vede come se stanno torturing? Torturando?*	**Alessandro**: Half shot the scene of the torture. Like at the doctor, he sees as if they are torturing? Torturing?
B: *Torturando, ok. Quindi un campo medio che è, come diceva Paolo, dalla vita in su. Quindi non e' importante che*	**B**: Torturing, OK. So a half shot that is, as Paolo said, from the waist up. So it's not important that we also see the legs of the

vediamo le gambe anche degli uomini e' solo importante che vediamo	men, it's only important that we see
Alessandro*: Le facce*	**Alessandro**: The faces
B*: E chi sono gli uomini. Come sono vestiti forse. E si', i visi. E la stanza. Che hai detto e come dal dottore. Quasi. Solo qua lo stanno torturando. Bene. Altre cose? Claudio?*	**B**: And who the men are. How they are dressed perhaps. And yes, their faces. And the room. Which you said is like the doctor's. Almost. Only here they're torturing him. Good. What else? Claudio?

* Note that here and in other excerpts, Amalia did not give permission to directly quote her comments in Italian. She did allow permission for her comments in English, which we will see later.

I have chosen a lengthy excerpt to illustrate how this activity played out for two reasons. First, I wanted to provide enough of the discussion to show the type of questions I was asking and the types of answers those questions elicited. Second, I wanted to make the point that this type of exchange went on for quite some time. In fact, this sequence of question and answers constituted no fewer twelve minutes of the total 50 minute class period.

IRF in classroom interactions. As each turn I had with these individual students shows, I asked questions whose answers I already knew, or of which I at least had a general idea of how the student would have responded. This is a typical IRF exchange—inquiry, response, feedback (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). To be sure, I did not know which individual shots from the scenes they would choose to highlight, or why, but once they mentioned the specific shot, I knew the "correct" answer to which kind of camera movement and framing perspective the director chose for that footage. Students rarely volunteered to speak during this activity given the IRF format.

IRF interactions have come to symbolize standard classroom discourse (Cazden, 1988/2001; Mehan, 1985; van Lier, 1996). Van Lier stated that in traditional classes

where the focus is on the transmission of information, the percentage of utterances that fall into the IRF structure has been found to be over half. The specific three-part interaction of initiation, response, and feedback is one that rarely occurs outside of a classroom setting. So, its pedagogical functions should be examined, if only briefly, here. First, with the instructor initiating and concluding each interaction, it is understood that he or she can guide the students in a pre-planned direction. Second, the students know immediately whether their answer was correct or incorrect. Third, the interaction itself prescribes a certain order to the class; it is unlikely that many students will shout out answers, potentially leading to chaotic communication. In sum, the IRF interaction allows the teacher to maintain control of the environment and to conduct an orderly lesson.

With the goal of asking students to review the filmic vocabulary in Italian, the IRF sequences do seem appropriate to a degree. In the exchanges, I was able to see whether students understood the concepts of the camera angles and movements and whether they could verbalize that understanding in the target language. However, for the larger course goal of increasing conversational literacy and linguistic and cultural awareness, the IRF interaction was not one that promoted autonomous and authentic interactions among the students.

In the following sample of the translation from the above excerpt, moments can be seen where I did not follow up on the students' responses to ask more complex and open-ended questions.

Lucia: He's crying.
B: He's crying, yes.

Lucia: He was crying.
B: When?
Lucia: with the close-up.
B: Ah! OK, so when there was a close-up, he was crying. Good. What else?

This turn could have been an excellent opportunity to explore the reasons for choosing certain camera angles and movements over others depending on what is depicted in the shot. When, for example, Lucia mentioned that the character in the scene was crying, I asked her to tell me when he was crying. She responded by way of referencing the camera angle—precisely the focus of the activity. But had I asked for further elaboration rather than "what else?," the activity could have become more interactive in nature, less teacher-centered, more sensitive to the students' autonomy as producers of knowledge, and advancing toward the goal of teaching students to look for patterns of representation in the sense of Barthes and Foucault.

Here is another transaction in which I was not sensitive to the student's potential ability to discuss patterns of representation:

B: Good. What else? Amalia, what did you write?
[Amalia said that she had written that men were running down below the houses and that the camera's orientation was a long shot.]
B: A long shot, so you see the men that are part of the action but you also see the surroundings that in that period, that is, in that moment, are important. And they're running on the *breasts. No, the roofs. *Tette* is breasts. *Tetti* is roofs. OK. Gotta make sure you make that gender distinction there. Good. What else?

I include this example as a way to show that the kind of activity asked of the students and the authority given to them to act had a direct effect on the nature of their participation. They answered minimally to my questions, as the IRF sequence that I established demanded only the minimal participation from them to receive "Good. What else?" as a

response. Since I did not encourage the student to elaborate on the response and instead did so myself, I do not know if Amalia would have been able to discuss the implications of choosing certain camera angles over another.

These examples of the Day 1 interactions, if considered alone as typical classroom moments, represent a teacher-centered environment in which students are asked to provide answers that they know, and not to conjecture about possible interpretations. However, if Day 1 is taken in the context of the entire four-day sequence, the prescriptivist nature of the classroom interactions was perhaps necessary in order for the students to build a sufficient knowledge base on which to continue to build and express their ideas with me and with one another. Since the excerpts provided for each day are representative of that day of any given film unit, the return on Day 1 to more teacher-centered, IRF interactions indicates a need for the students to receive new information from me about the new genre and content area for the new film before they could engage in more highly demanding cognitive tasks of spontaneous authentic interaction in the target language.

In each film unit I asked the students to perform the synthetic task of understanding new content, understanding the language that is used to express that content, and understanding and engaging in complex analytical activities. Perhaps the presentational nature of the Day 1 activities is a necessary first step, particularly in a foreign language setting, toward the long-term goal of engaging in authentic, text-based, extended discourse. We will now see how with each day in the film unit, the students become more autonomous and confident in their responses, and their ability to express

complex ideas in extended discourse increases as they continue to internalize both the new content and the language used to express that content.

Day 2

As the following discussion will illustrate, Day 2 of the film unit also tended to be characterized by teacher-led interactions and less student-student interaction. However, in contrast to Day 1, a movement toward spontaneous self-expression on the students' parts is evident.

The objectives of the second day of pre-viewing activities focused on further contextualizing the film in its socio-historical environment and developing the students' awareness of their personal feelings and experiences to the topic at hand. I brought to class, and in some cases had them read ahead of time at home, various materials related to the film in some way: genre, content, historical background, characters being portrayed, particular conflicts in the film, etc. This helped situate the film in its specific cultural context and helped the students understand the film from that context as opposed to the American college student subject position. These activities were also structured in a way to guide students to examine how language is used differently in different textual genres, inviting them to explore the many varieties of language use.

Table 4.3: Day 2 lesson objectives and activities

Lesson objective	Activity	Student actions
Summarizing reading, clarifying mis-readings	Students read preferred and requested portions of written text aloud and attempt to summarize	Students were given short readings related to the content of the film. They had to identify the concrete features of the text, such as

		the who, what, when, and where. Any misunderstandings or confusion about the readings were clarified at this time.
Making personal connections	Small-group and whole-class discussions about personal connections to the reading	Students would first discuss in small groups and then share with the class their personal feelings or experiences with the reading's topic.
Making connections to Day 1 discussions	Small-group and whole-class discussions about the connections of the reading to the film clip viewed and discussed on Day 1	To turn the attention back to the film, students would use their personal experiences and concrete understanding of the reading to further make predictions about the film for that unit.
Debate	Team-discussions followed by in-class debate	The class was divided into two groups, and they chose a side to take on the issue under discussion in the reading and in the film. Using the knowledge from the reading and the imagery and gestures from the film the students would argue for or against a topic. They were given a few minutes to plan their key points in the debate, then they debated as a class. I served as moderator.

As the table shows, Day 2 objectives were not dedicated to the initial presentation of the subject matter. Instead, it was dedicated to reviewing the comprehension tasks from Day 1 and supporting the production of new knowledge with supplemental print and video texts.

Summarize reading, clarify mis-readings. Whether the students read the text ahead of time as homework or we read it for the first time together in class, students were called on to read portions aloud in class and to provide a summary of the main points of the reading. The first step in the sequential model is to identify the concrete elements of a text, the who, what, when, and where.

Making personal connections. Once the concrete facts of the reading were made clear and any misunderstandings corrected, students would discuss briefly in groups any connection the reading had to their own lives, to American culture, or to anything they were familiar with. A few minutes were spent sharing the highlights of the small group discussions with the whole class.

Making connections to Day 1 discussions. Given the information and initial analyses the students had discussed on Day 1, we turned our attention back to the film and tried to make connections from the reading to the clip we had viewed the day before. Students were urged to predict further what they believed the conflicts of the film would be, and what position the characters would take. This portion of the lesson was usually done as a whole-class brainstorming session.

Debate. With the information from the supplemental text read, students were divided into two groups, and they chose which side of the conflict to argue according to their personal beliefs. Each group had approximately five minutes to quickly sketch out their opening argument and to note the supporting points they would use to argue their side. This activity allowed the students to make a personal connection to the conflict represented in the film thus far, and in the reading. Students were not asked to embody a

character, but rather to be themselves during this debate. Another debate usually took place on Day 4, which will be discussed below.

The excerpt

Now I will show the excerpt from Day 2. This is taken from the fifth film of the semester. As the lesson plan explains above, first we summarized and clarified a reading that we had begun to discuss on Day 1. For this film, *Fame chimica* (The Munchies) I had them read two short news articles. The first described in detail what an Italian ghetto in Rome looked like and what the fundamental problems were in terms of its occupants and the illegal activities common to the area. The second article described a ghetto in a small northern Italian city, Pavia, and explained that the city decided to evacuate the building at the center of the ghetto and board it up so that no one could enter. There was some debate in the city about whether this was the right thing to do, considering that some tenants living in the building were law-abiding citizens.

This issue is very close to one represented in the film; the city wanted to erect a fence around the central piazza of the neighborhood so keep the drug selling immigrants out. Much of the film character's interactions were centered around this debate. The excerpt shown here is from the final discussion of the articles, just before I showed them the film clip of a debate between father and son about the erection of the fence. Bianca said she had shared the article we read in class with one of her Italian friends from Rome. This friend told her that it seemed unlikely, because, according to him, there are no ghettos in Italy. In this excerpt it is important to note that, like Day 1, each turn was between a student and myself; they did not interact with one another. However, in

contrast to Day 1, my questions were open-ended, and the students volunteered to speak—I did not have to call on anyone to join the conversation.

Table 4.4: Day 2 transcription excerpt

Transcription	Translation
B: *Perchè secondo voi un italiano direbbe che i ghetti non esistono? Com'è possibile che non sa?*	**B:** Why, in your (pl.) opinion, would an Italian say that ghettos don't exist? How is it possible that he doesn't know?
Cristina: *È secreto?*	**Cristina:** It's a secret?
B: *Segreto? In che senso?*	**B:** A secret? In what way?
Cristina: *Non lo so!* [laughs]	**Cristina:** I don't know! [laughs]
Tiziana: *Forse la sua – amica o amico?*	**Tiziana:** maybe her – male or female friend?
Bianca: *O*	**Bianca:** male
B: *Amico*	**B:** male friend
Tiziana: *Forse il suo amico è di una classe particolare e non vede questa scena?*	**Tiziana:** Maybe her friend is from a particular class and he doesn't see this scene?
[*10 seconds silence*]	
B: *OK. Quindi se appartiene a una classe della società diversa magari non vede queste cose. I ghetti, cioè, come geografia è un'entità in sé. No? Non è che, cioe' proprio la parola 'ghetto' vuol dire che è tutto concentrato in una zona. Non è che ci sono crimini sparsi attraverso tutta la città. È una zona in particolare, un quartiere. Quindi magari lui vive dall'altra parte della città.*	**B:** OK. So if he belongs to a different social class maybe he doesn't see these things. Ghettos, I mean, as for geography it's an entity in and of itself. No? It's not that, I mean, the word itself, *ghetto* means that it's all concentrated in one area. It's not that there are criminals spread all around the city. It's a particular area, a neighborhood. So maybe he lives on the other side of the city.
Bianca: *Sì. Lui viva in Trastevere forse? Boh.*	**Bianca:** Yes. He lives in Trastevere, maybe? I dunno.
[*7 seconds silence*]	
B: *Poi l'articolo, quello più breve, quello che abbiamo letto lunedì, diceva a Torino a Milano a Bologna e adesso sta cominciando a Roma. Quindi, magari veramente non ci sono verso sud d'Italia. Magari è un fenomeno che esiste solo nell'Italia settentrionale. Remember those words? Settentrionale? Meridionale?*	**B:** Then the article, the shorter one, the one we read Monday, said in Turin, Milan, Bologna and now it's starting in Rome. So, maybe there really aren't any in southern Italy. Perhaps it's a phenomenon that exists only in northern Italy. Remember those words? Northern? Southern?
[Tommaso sighs]	

B: *Va bene. Allora…*	**B:** OK. So…

This excerpt was chosen as representative of Day 2 to show the beginning stages of the students' spontaneous contributions to the discussion and to the initial negotiation of meaning of the texts viewed in the class thus far.

In this short segment some differences from the Day 1 exchanges can be identified. First, some students volunteered responses; I did not have to call on anyone to speak. Second, I only had to ask one question (the first line of the transcript) to get some conversation going, and that question was open-ended; it was not a question to which I already knew the answer. Third, the students who did volunteer their comments were willing to venture a guess although not entirely sure of the validity of their comments. Unlike in the Day 1 interactions, where students would not speak unless, a) they were called upon; and b) they knew they had a correct answer, in this interaction students volunteered their comments as possible explanations for the phenomenon in question.

Although an indication of the students' evolving toward a Third Space, this excerpt does not yet show students in a more extensive expression of autonomy and authority as Italian speakers, as all interactions were still directed through me, as though for confirmation. For example, when Tiziana speculated that, "Maybe [Bianca's] friend is from a particular class and he doesn't see this scene?" her rising intonation, as though asking a question, shows that she was unsure of the soundness or validity of her comment. Furthermore, even when conjecturing about the friend's socioeconomic status, Tiziana spoke to me rather than directly to her classmate, referring to her in the third person, not the second. A visual recording would have shown that despite sitting in a

circle (as we did every day), the students all looked at me when speaking, not at one another.

So, we can see here a gradual shift from Day 1 toward more student-led interactions. Students volunteered to speak, and their utterances were not calculated responses to which they knew the answer, or to which they knew that I knew the answer. Instead, they were questions to which no right or wrong answer existed (unlike in the IRF exchange of Day 1). The two long silences in this exchange (see transcript, pp. 80-81) were my attempt to allow other students to join in and share their thoughts and opinions without telling them to do so. However, at close to ten seconds, I came in and made longer utterances, explaining my own thoughts as to why an Italian would not know about the ghettos in his own city. The students did not demonstrate complete autonomy in Day 2, but they were certainly more engaged in initiating the content than in Day 1.

Day 3

Day three marked the first day of post-viewing activities, and with this focus a distinct increase in students' initiating discourse is evident. After two days of previewing activities, students saw the full-length film, either at the departmental film showing or on their own time at the library. Before the subsequent class meeting, they were required to post comments to an electronic discussion board. I asked that they post at least one original comment or question and one response to another student's comment or question. They were encouraged to post more than twice, and some students often did. The third day of the unit was dedicated to elaborating on their electronic written

discussions, clarifying and exploring any unanswered questions from the discussions, correcting mis-readings, and sharing personal opinions about the film. Table 4.5 provides a graphic overview of this sequence.

Table 4.5: Day 3 lesson objectives and activities

Lesson objective	Activity	Student actions
Sharing opinions	Students gave their initial reactions	Students took turns as a whole class stating whether they enjoyed the film, their reasons for that opinion, and whether they would recommend it to anyone (and if so to whom, and why)
Small-group discussions	Students rehashed their written discussions in small groups	Students got together with their assigned group from the online written discussions about the film. This time was given for them to elaborate on any comments or questions that were made within their group and to make comments or questions that had arisen since their online discussion
Whole-class discussion	Share with the whole class	Students then shared with the whole class what they had discussed in their small groups. In some cases topics overlapped across groups and in many cases each group discussed something unique about the film.
Identifying themes and messages	Speculating on the film's message(s) for different populations	Students would begin to brainstorm about the take-away message of the film, or identify the various themes that were at play in the film. This part of the

		discussion often led to a comparison of the given film to others viewed in the film series.

Whereas in Days 1 and 2 the key goals were comprehension and the initial production of new knowledge, Day 3's pedagogical main goals were to connect the previous discussions and supplemental texts to the actual outcomes of the film and to identify the various messages in the film in relation to both the students' personal opinions as well as the supplemental texts read or viewed in Days 1 and 2.

Sharing opinions. For the warm-up to Day 3, students took turns for the first five minutes or so as a whole class stating whether they enjoyed the film, their reasons for that opinion, and whether they would recommend it to anyone, and if so to whom, and why. This process allowed the students to identify on a very basic level how the film moved them and in what ways. As a class we would then use this information to help direct the class conversations later in the day, each of us addressing specific class members on their opinions.

Small-group discussions. For the following fifteen minutes, students got together with their assigned group from the online written discussions about the film. This time was given for them to elaborate on any comments or questions that were made within their group and to make comments or questions that had arisen since their online discussion. Often students spent the first several minutes of this activity simply re-reading the online posts, a printed copy of which I provided them, refreshing their memories of what their group members had said.

Whole-class discussion. Students then shared with the whole class what they had discussed in their small groups. In some cases topics overlapped across groups, but in many cases each group discussed something unique about the film. As a rule, I observed students listening to these presentations with particular attention when the three different groups chose to discuss three completely separate perspectives about the same text. Predictably, subsequent discussions proved to be lively when the groups all focused on separate aspects of the film.

Identifying themes and messages. The last several minutes of the lesson were dedicated to the students' trying to make a statement about what they felt were the main themes and messages of the film. I typically asked them what they believed the director wanted us to come away with. Often this focus would lead to a discussion of what Italians would come away with versus how we as Americans reacted. Additionally, students often compared the given film to the others viewed throughout the semester. Toward the end of the semester, they began to notice certain conventions of Italian films, such as their often unhappy or ambiguous endings and their preference for dialogue between characters versus high-intensity action (even in a war movie). This activity concluded with the sharing of personal opinions and clarification of any misunderstandings about the film.

The excerpt

To show the dramatic shift from Day 2 to Day 3 toward a more robust and interactive conversation cycle, I will discuss an excerpt that comes from the fourth film of the semester, which was scheduled after the second self-evaluations were due. In two

of these self-evaluations, the students had suggested the possibility of having the in-class small group discussion about a different group's online posts rather than their own. For example, Gianluca wrote that he enjoyed seeing the films and writing the responses for the asynchronous discussion, but that in the in-class discussion he found himself "repeating a lot of information" that he had already posted. He proposed that reviewing the written discussions of another group, rather than his own, "would spark a lot of new ideas and material" for in-class conversation.

I thought this was an interesting idea, and as we were at the midpoint of the semester, it seemed like an opportune time to try to make the switch. I also saw granting this suggestion as a way to show the students that they did have authority over how they learned and how they could directly affect their learning environment in a way that made sense to them. So, instead of commenting on their own posts, they saw the posts from another group's asynchronous discussion. They were asked to come to class the following Monday (the day from which the following sample comes) having chosen at least one comment from a different group that they would like addressed in their small group in-class discussions. Before the class went in to their smaller discussion groups, I asked them each to read aloud the quote they had chosen to discuss in their small groups. This simple act generated so much conversation that I opted not to put them in small groups, and instead we discussed as a whole class the individual comments that each student chose.

The excerpt I provide for this day is quite long, so I will first provide a full transcript of the class conversation uninterrupted, with the English translation in the right

column. In Table 4.6, I provide the full transcript first in order to highlight the difference from the representative Day 1 and Day 2 excerpts provided above. It is important to note the length of the students' comments, to whom those comments are addressed, and my minimal presence in this conversation. I will follow the Table 4.6 with the English translation of the excerpt, interspersed with commentary. The reader should keep in mind that I did not delete, rearrange, or in any other way change the conversational turns that took place in this segment.

Table 4.6: Day 3 transcription excerpt

Transcription	Translation
Alessandro: *Ho scelto il risposto di Cristina. E lo ho scelto perche' dice che che non, che , che e' realistico per un gruppo di persone che sono amice quando sono diversi, como nel film. E io lo sono d'accordo con Lucia perche' dice che tutti gli amici sono diversi o ci sono molti amice che soni diversi. Yo ho amice che sono moltissimi? or or, o molto diversi da me.*	**Alessandro**: I chose Cristina's response. And I chose it because she says that, not, that, that it's realistic for a group of people that are friends when they are different, like in the film. And I agree with Lucia because she said that all friends are different or there are many friends that are different. I have friends that are very much? or or, or very different from me.
B: *Diversissimi!*	**B**: Very different!
Alessandro: *Diversissimi da me. Ho un amico che ha 33 anni e usciamo insieme e lo conosco da quando avevo 8 ani, come un fratelo. Ho un amico da South Carolina e l'ho conosciuto nel liceo e ha l'accento southern?*	**Alessandro**: Very different from me. I have a friend who is 33 and we go out together and I've known him since when I was 8, like a brother. I have a friend from South Carolina and I met him in high school and he has a accent… southern?
B: *Del sud*	**B**: From the south.
Alessandro: *Del sud. Ma si, dresses? come si dice?*	**Alessandro**: From the south. But he dresses? How do you say that?
B: *Si veste.*	**B**: He dresses.
Alessandro: *Si veste come un thug. Ma siamo, ma loro sono alcune dei miei amice piu' closest, non so come si dice.*	**Alessandro**: He dresses like a thug. But we are, but they are some of my friends most closest, I don't know how to say it.
B: *Piu' vicini.*	**B**: Most close.
Alessandro: *Piu' vicini. Migliori amici.*	**Alessandro**: Most close. Best friends.

Bianca: *Ma queste cose non sono cose di ideologia. Nel film le differenze sono differenze di ideologia e di stile di vita.*	**Bianca**: But these are not things of ideology. In the movie the differences are differences of ideology and lifestyle.
Lucia: *Ma non era cosi' differente.*	**Lucia**: But it wasn't that different.
Bianca: *No! Io sono d'accordo, ma il punto che Cristina voleva fare e' che nel realta' forse in un gruppo di amici c'e' uno o due che sono cosi' diversi, ma in questo gruppo sono tutti diversi cosi'. E per me e' un argomento di Ozpetek che siamo tutti uguali e non siamo cosi' diversi. Tutti possono essere amici come questo gruppo.*	**Bianca**: No! I agree, but the point that Cristina wanted to make is that in reality maybe in a group of friends there are one or two that are so different, but in this group they are all so different. And for me it's Ozpetek's argument that we are all the same and we're not so different. Everyone can be friends as in this group.
Lucia: *Non sono d'accordo perche' non tutti erano diversi. No, forse no, non capisco quello che voli dIRF come diverso. Qual e' what's your definition di diverso.*	**Lucia**: I don't agree because they were not different. No, maybe not, maybe I don't understand what you want to say by "different". What is, what's your definition of "different"?
Bianca: *Si'*	**Bianca**: Yes.
B: *Qual e' la definizione.*	**B**: What is the definition.
Bianca: *Va bene. E' un punto buono. C'e' una copia sposato, heterosessuale?*	**Bianca**: OK. It's a good point. There's a married couple…heterosexual?
B: *Eterosessuale. Senza la 'h'*	**B**: Eterosessuale. Without the 'h'
Bianca: *OK. E c'e' una copia omosessuale. Un single. Una persona con problemi con le droghe. E come Rent, ma in New York e' piu' cosi'.*	**Bianca**: OK. And there's a homosexual couple. A single. A person with drug problems. It's like Rent, but in New York it's more just so.
Lucia: *C'era 4 persone che erano omosessuali nel gruppo. La copia, il vecchio*	**Lucia**: There were four people that were homosexual in the group. The couple, the old
Gianluca: *Il frocio*	**Gianluca**: The fag
All: laugh	
Lucia: *Si'! E lo scrittore. Anche la moglie, con problemi con le droghe era uscita con il bisessuale, il bisessuale, Sergio? E la copia eterosessuale…um… I can't explain this in Italian. I have to say this in English. I can't do it, non posso. OK, can I say this in English?*	**Lucia:** Yes! And the writer. Also the wife, with drug problems had gone out with the bisexual, the bisexual, Sergio. And the hetersexual couple…um…I can't explain this in Italian. I have to say this in English. I can't do it, I can't. OK, can I say this in English?
B: *OK un attimo di inglese.*	**B**: OK a moment of English.
Lucia: *OK so what I'm trying to say is that the only differences I see you're pointing out, aside from the drugs, is just the hetersexual and homosexuality, which is*	**Lucia**: OK so what I'm trying to say is that the only differences I see you're pointing out, aside from the drugs, is just the heterosexual and homosexuality, which is

not that diverse, that doesn't make you so different. It's only your sexual preference it's like preferring	not that diverse, that doesn't make you so different. It's only your sexual preference it's like preferring
Bianca: *Si'*	**Bianca**: Yes.
Lucia: *And people who don't understand relationships might disagree with me, but it's sort of like preferring a red head versus a blonde haired baby. It's just that society puts on this extra layer about dating someone of the same sex, but if you look at the movie, you'll see that the homosexuality, the homosexual couple go through the same things as the heterosexual couples*	**Lucia**: And people who don't understand relationships might disagree with me, but it's sort of like preferring a red head versus a blonde haired baby. It's just that society puts on this extra layer about dating someone of the same sex, but if you look at the movie, you'll see that the homosexuality, the homosexual couple go through the same things as the heterosexual couples
Bianca: *Yea, si'*	**Chaira**: Yea, yea.
Lucia: *And so, there's really nothing too different. It's just that they're two people of the same gender, and that's basically the main difference. And but you still go through the same problems in a relationship, you still go through the amorous part and go through the suffering and all this other stuff. And, so I don't see how that could be a barrier with friendships because, as a lesbian, I am a lesbian, and I don't feel like I have to say that but I'm just saying it just to make my point is that I have many friends who are straight. And so whether I'm in a relationship or not I don't see how that's a barrier.*	**Lucia**: And so, there's really nothing too different. It's just that they're two people of the same gender, and that's basically the main difference. And but you still go through the same problems in a relationship, you still go through the amorous part and go through the suffering and all this other stuff. And, so I don't see how that could be a barrier with friendships because, as a lesbian, I am a lesbian, and I don't feel like I have to say that but I'm just saying it just to make my point is that I have many friends who are straight. And so whether I'm in a relationship or not I don't see how that's a barrier.
Bianca: *No, si', sono d'accordo.*	**Bianca**: No, yes, I agree.
Lucia: *OK*	**Lucia**: OK
Bianca: *No, ma il punto e' che …*	**Bianca**: No, but the point is that …
Lucia: *No, non credo che sia diversa. Solo perche' sono lesbica, non credo che sia diversa.*	**Lucia**: No, I don't believe it's different. Just because I'm a lesbian, I don't believe it's different
Bianca: *No, io sono d'accordo ma…(under breath) Italian!*	**Bianca**: No, I agree but …(under breath) Italian!
Here Amalia interrupts the discussion to explain that she does not follow the line of discussion, that she does not understand what Lucia and Bianca are arguing about.	
B: *Brava. Cioe' I'm glad you spoke up!*	**B**: Brava. I mean, I'm glad you spoke up!

Lucia: *I didn't understand it either when I saw it and that's why I'm thinking maybe it's because societal baggage that's preventing people to think that it's not realistic for people to be*	**Lucia**: I didn't understand it either when I saw it and that's why I'm thinking maybe it's because societal baggage that's preventing people to think that it's not realistic for people to be
Bianca: *OK I'm gonna try*	**Bianca**: OK I'm gonna try
B: *Italiano ora?*	**B**: Italian now?
Bianca e **Lucia**: *OK! OK! OK!*	**Bianca e Lucia**: OK! OK! OK!
Bianca: *Um, well, no no no!*	**Bianca**: Um, well, no no no!
B: *Ce la fai! Ce la fai! Si', Claudio vai.*	**B**: You can do it! You can do it! Yes, Claudio, go.
Claudio: *Ho scelto*	**Claudio**: I chose
All: burst into raucous laughter	
B: *Cambiamo argomento!*	**B**: We're changing the subject!
Claudio: *It's the same line. But um, dice ha detto che 'avrei voluto interessante se il film aveva spiegato piu' di come gli amici diventano cosi' intimi e um, like, sono diversi ma penso che Cristina cerchi di dIRF dIRF che ... I forgot the verb tense. Like, "it would be"?*	**Claudio**: It's the same line. But um, she says that 'I would have wanted interesting if the film had explained more how the friends became so close, and um, like they are different but I think that Cristina wants to say, say that…I forgot the verb tense. Like, "it would be?"
B: *Sarebbe*	**B**: It would be
Claudio: *Sarebbe interessante si ... si ... vedere ... come diventare amici. How they became friends.*	**Claudio**: It would be interesting if… if… to see…how to become friends. How they became friends.

I have provided an uninterrupted view of the admittedly lengthy excerpt to show that, in marked contrast to the interactions of Days 1 and 2, the conversational turns in this segment include six interlocutors interacting with one another. For example, whereas in Day 2 the students' comments were addressed to me—even though they were commenting on one another's ideas—here in Day 3 the students address one another directly, and even interrupt one another, without fist seeking permission or confirmation from me.

Now I provide the English translation of the transcript annotated with commentary.

> **Alessandro**: I chose Cristina's response. And I chose it because she says that, not, that, that it's realistic for a group of people that are friends when they are different, like in the film. And I agree with Lucia because she said that all friends are different or there are many friends that are different. I have friends that are very much? or or, or very different from me.
> **B**: Very different!
> **Alessandro**: Very different from me. I have a friend who is 33 and we go out together and I've known him since I was 8, like a brother. I have a friend from South Carolina and I met him in high school and he has a accent… southern?.
> **B**: From the south.
> **Alessandro**: From the south. But he dresses? How do you say that?
> **B**: He dresses.
> **Alessandro**: He dresses like a thug. But we are, but they are some of my friends most closest, I don't know how to say it.
> **B**: Most close.
> **Alessandro**: Most close. Best friends.

Alessandro offered to start the round of reading the quote he chose. He introduced his comments by providing the basis for his choice, citing his classmates and illustrating his point with personal examples ("a friend" who "dresses like a thug"). He explained why he chose this particular comment by relating it to his own life—he talked about his relationships with friends who are seemingly different from him. However, the examples of their differences were restricted to their clothing, age, and provenance. The conversation continued:

> **Bianca**: But these are not things of ideology. In the movie the differences are differences of ideology and lifestyle.

Bianca immediately questioned Alessandro on the different meanings that "difference" can have. She explained that the differences she thought he was talking about were superficial, not ideological differences. She suggested that the differences among the

group of friends in the film were of beliefs and principles, and not a matter of individual taste or idiosycnrosy.

Lucia: But it wasn't that different.

Lucia responded immediately to Bianca, disagreeing with her. Lucia claimed that the friends in the group of the film were not in fact different; they did not, in her view, have such diverse ideologies or lifestyles.

> **Bianca**: No! I agree, but the point that Cristina wanted to make is that in reality maybe in a group of friends there are one or two that are so different, but in this group they are all so different. And for me it's Ozpetek's argument that we are all the same and we're not so different. Everyone can be friends as in this group.

Bianca tried to explain herself, but she succeeded instead in contradicting herself. She said she agreed with Lucia that the friends of the group in the film were not so different from one another. Yet, she said that in the film they were "all so different." It is not clear whether she was trying to explain her own understanding of the group dynamics in the film, or if she was explaining the comment of Cristina, the student whose quote was chosen by Alessandro. Cristina, it should be noted, was absent on this day, so she was not there to explain her original written comment. Bianca's attempt to interpret the authorial intent of the characters in the film led to this contradiction. She claimed on the one hand that the group of friends was not so different that they could not be friends. But to make that point, the director of the film had to choose characters who were, indeed, different. This is where Lucia disagreed.

> **Lucia**: I don't agree, because they were not different. No, maybe not, maybe I don't understand what you want to say by "different". What is, what's your definition of "different"?
> **Bianca**: Yes.

B: What is the definition.
Bianca: OK. It's a good point. There's a married couple…heterosexual?
B: Eterosessuale. Without the 'h'
Bianca: OK. And there's a homosexual couple. A single. A person with drug problems. It's like Rent, but in New York it's more just so.

Lucia explained again that the group in the film did not represent different ideologies. She then offered the idea that perhaps she and Bianca were defining the word "different" in different ways. She sought Bianca's operationalization of the terminology. In an interview with Lucia, she explained to me that as a graduate student in sociolinguistics she is trained to clarify how she interprets certain terms in order to be clear of how she will use those terms in an analysis. She thought that perhaps this was a case in which she and Bianca were interpreting the term "different" in different ways.

The nature of the conversation at this point in the excerpt is an example of the students' implementing theory—a metacognitive task—to make meaning of the text. Bianca and Lucia were arguing about what sign systems were present in the film that could represent different ideologies among the characters. Without knowing the name of the theory or even the series of moves required, they were beginning to engage in their own form of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), which examines the imbrications between language use and social or institutional practices. While Bianca and Lucia were not discussing the linguistic language use of the film, they were discussing the filmic language use and how it represented social ideologies.

Lucia continued the conversation:

Lucia: There were four people that were homosexual in the group. The couple, the old
Gianluca: The fag
All: [laugh]

Lucia: Yes! And the writer. Also the wife, with drug problems had gone out with the bisexual, the bisexual, Sergio. And the heterosexual couple…um…I can't explain this in Italian. I have to say this in English. I can't do it, I can't. OK, can I say this in English?
B: OK a moment of English.
Lucia: OK so what I'm trying to say is that the only differences I see you're pointing out, aside from the drugs, is just the heterosexual and homosexuality, which is not that diverse, that doesn't make you so different. It's only your sexual preference it's like preferring
Bianca: Yes.
Lucia: And people who don't understand relationships might disagree with me, but it's sort of like preferring a red head versus a blonde haired baby. It's just that society puts on this extra layer about dating someone of the same sex, but if you look at the movie, you'll see that the homosexuality, the homosexual couple go through the same things as the heterosexual couples
Bianca: Yea, yea.
Lucia: And so, there's really nothing too different. It's just that they're two people of the same gender, and that's basically the main difference. And but you still go through the same problems in a relationship, you still go through the amorous part and go through the suffering and all this other stuff. And, so I don't see how that could be a barrier with friendships because, as a lesbian, I am a lesbian, and I don't feel like I have to say that but I'm just saying it just to make my point is that I have many friends who are straight. And so whether I'm in a relationship or not I don't see how that's a barrier.
Bianca: No, yes, I agree.
Lucia: OK

In this longer segment, Lucia, whose emotions were growing stronger in relation to the discussion, realized that she needed to be sure she had complete control over what she was saying so that she could clearly explain her feelings, which were important to her personally. So, she asked, "can I say this in English?"

Lucia carefully positioned herself as a lesbian in this conversation to send a strong message that one's sexual preference does not categorically differentiate one from other people. She claimed her authority on this matter by positioning herself the way she did.

Without that positioning, her argument might not have carried enough weight with the other classmates to have truly made her point understood.

At this point in the conversation, a number of features of the Third Space are suggested. First, the students had taken over the task and reappropriated it to meet their own needs for conversation. The instructions were to go around the room with each student reading the quote that he or she wanted to discuss that morning. Instead, at the first quote read, Bianca and Lucia, who felt strongly about that comment, began immediately to debate their understandings of the comment, the film, and of the outside world. I did not try to redirect the students back to my original plan for that activity. The conversation was lively, all students were engaged in speaking or listening, and some were even taking notes.

Second, evident from this classroom excerpt, I was no longer important in this conversation as the knowledge-disseminator. As manifest in the longer transcript (see Table 4.6) the students freely interrupted one another, and seldom did they look to me for help or answers, unless they were unsure of how to say a particular word or phrase—I had assumed a facilitator rather than a director role at this juncture.

Third, the data show how the environment affected the way students interacted with one another. Lucia determined our classroom as a space that welcomed the discussion of what she referred to in our interview as the "normalcy of being a lesbian." Lucia explained to me in the interview that this is a topic about which she is very passionate, and she does not shy away from opportunities to express her feelings about it. Similarly, as we will see below, the other students had an effect on the environment too.

No longer did the discourse and atmosphere of the space seem like that of a university classroom, but more like a book club in which different opinions and interpretations of the film were offered in a very personal and emotional way. The emotional tension in the room was building, and some students began to shift in their seats, wondering where the conversation would lead next. However, there was no indication that the level of tension was too great or uncomfortable that the conversation could not continue. And so, it did:

> **Bianca**: No, but the point is that
> **Lucia**: No, I don't believe it's different. Only because I'm a lesbian, I don't believe it's different
> **Bianca**: No, I agree but …(under breath) Italian!

After Lucia's explanation of how differences in appearance, gender, and sexual preference do not equate with ideological differences between two human beings, Bianca attempted to agree with her. However, she was interrupted by Lucia once again, who tried to emphasize that her own sexual preferences did not make her a different kind of person. Lucia's emotions were clearly charged here, as she had already explained this to the class, and yet she found it necessary to restate that "only because [she's] a lesbian [she doesn't] believe it's different."

Bianca once again tried to indicate that she understood and even agreed with her, but stated that she was perhaps trying to make a different point. She also seemed to experience difficulty in expressing herself in the target language, and she muttered, under her breath "Italian!" as though she were frustrated. While the class waited a silent minute for Bianca to collect her thoughts in Italian, Amalia, who had not yet spoken on this day, confessed that she did not understand what her two classmates were arguing about. I congratulated her for letting us know that she was not following the conversation.

Lucia: I didn't understand it either when I saw it and that's why I'm thinking maybe it's because societal baggage that's preventing people to think that it's not realistic for people to be
Bianca: OK I'm gonna try
B: Italian now?
Bianca e **Lucia**: OK! OK! OK!
Bianca: Um, well, no no no!
B: You can do it! You can do it!
[Claudio raises his hand]
B: Yes, Claudio, go.
Claudio: I chose…
All: [burst into raucous laughter.]
B: We're changing the subject!

In this segment Lucia agreed with Amalia, though that which they did not understand was different. Amalia was not able to follow the line of argument in the in-class discussion. Lucia, on the other hand, did not understand the initial written comment that Alessandro presented to the class at the beginning of this activity. She began to explain why it was that she did not understand how one's sexual preference could make one a different person when Bianca interrupted her. She seemed to have thought through how to make her statement in Italian and was now ready to share with the class. Then she changed her mind and said, "no no no." Just then, Claudio, who was not typically one to volunteer speaking in class, decided to share with the class the quote he had chosen to discuss. After saying only "I chose" the whole class burst into wild laughter at the *double entendre* implied by Claudio's initiation of a new topic, which the class interpreted as an attempt to move away from the topic of sexual preference.

During the interviews, some students shared that they were indeed feeling the growing tension between Lucia and Bianca, particularly after Lucia's disclosure of her own sexual preferences. Lucia explained to me in our interview that she did not consider

her sexual preference as a private matter, much as heterosexuals do not hide their heterosexuality. She told me that she often makes the very point she was making in this class whenever and wherever she feels it is appropriate, simply because it is a topic of great importance to her. However, I believe that the rest of the class felt that her disclosure was more of a confession, and they were not sure how best to react to the points she was making. Thus, the class welcomed Claudio's unintended moment of comic relief. By saying "I chose," it seemed as if Claudio were changing the subject. However, he explained:

> **Claudio**: It's the same line. But um, she says that 'I would have wanted interesting if the film had explained more how the friends became so close, and um, like they are different but I think that Cristina wants to say, say that…I forgot the verb tense. Like, it would be?
> **B**: It would be
> **Claudio**: It would be interesting if… if… to see…how to become friends. How they became friends.

Although his question came from the same original written comment that Cristina had written to her online discussion group, it was in fact a change of subject. It did put a stop to the increasingly intense argument between Bianca and Lucia. Although there was no indication that any class member was getting upset, it was clear that Bianca's and Lucia's emotions were attached to what they were saying, and the two women desperately wanted to make their points understood, not only to one another but to the whole audience of the class. As their laughter indicates, everyone was tuned in to this moment and relieved to have the resultant tensions reduced.

In terms of the quality of this interaction, one of the first striking features, particularly when viewed in its original Italian without my analytical interruptions, are

the number of turns the students take versus my contributions. I contributed a total of 12 utterances in the total sequence, all of which were no more than one line (no more than a few words) and were almost exclusively to answer a vocabulary question of the current speaker. In this segment, my utterances made up 27% of the classroom talk; the remaining 73% of talk time was shared among six students. This particular excerpt occurred at the beginning of the lesson, which set the tone for the rest of the class period. In the 50 minutes of class, I made a total of 93 utterances, 19 of which were answers to students' questions about vocabulary or the pronunciation of a word. This leaves 74 utterances on my part which were conversational (not linguistic) in nature, or 31% of total classroom talk. In other words, the classroom talk was clearly dominated by the students.

Another feature of this interaction is the spontaneous and authentic nature of the peer-to-peer dialogue. The students did not look to me—or even at me—to justify what they were saying, or how they were saying it, save the few times when they asked me specifically how to say a certain word or phrase. They were using their own voices to speak about their understanding of the film, of Italian culture, of human nature, and of what they believed other students were trying to communicate. They were not performing their speech acts for me as a teacher; rather they were having a conversation with one another—I just happened to be another person in the room. The only time my presence was officially acknowledged was when a student would ask me for help in vocabulary and when Lucia asked me if she could speak in English.

As for my motives as a teacher for granting Lucia's request to speak in English, I allowed it as I understood the importance she placed on what she had to say. One of the goals of the course overall was to increase students' interpretive skills and abilities to connect fictional texts to their personal lives in meaningful and mindful ways. To promote a Third Space, I considered the content of the students' thoughts in this case was as important as the language used. Another such instance of L1 in the classroom is illustrated below in my analysis of the Day 4 excerpts.

Day 4

As in each individual activity discussed herewith, the overall unit structure was designed so that we began by declaring the concrete features of the text, and ended by synthesizing this new content with our own personal histories and using that synthesis to create a new text. On this day, students gave their group presentations, and a final synthesis activity concluded the discussion for that particular film.

Table 4.7: Day 4 lesson objectives and activities

Lesson objective	Activity	Student actions
Student presentations	10-15 minute presentations	Students chose which film to perform a presentation with a partner or two from class. Each student was responsible for approximately five minutes of speaking time in the presentation. The presentations were to be theatrical in nature, not presentational.
Final synthesis	Group activity involving creating a new text as	Students worked in small groups on a given task

	extension of film	designed to have them create a new text based on the film. Examples include a trailer to the film, a deleted scene, an alternate ending, and in some cases a debate.

As the table indicates, no new information was presented in Day 4, and the class was dedicated first to the group presentations and a final synthesis activity in which I asked them to create a new text that incorporated the film, the supplemental materials, and our prior class discussions.

Student presentations. The ten students were divided into groups of two or three to perform an oral presentation. Each group had to present on only one film. The requirements were that the presentation be theatrical in nature (not merely informational) and that they be directly related to the film but in a new and original direction. Most students opted to create and perform a deleted scene from the film or an alternate ending. One group chose to perform a skit in which two of the characters were guests on an American talk show fifteen years later. This choice allowed the students to identify the token details of each character and the scene they were performing in order to represent a whole concept. It also allowed them to work with the film's content, genre, and language from both an American and a retrospective point of view, giving students a chance for creativity and self-expression in a cross-cultural context. Regardless of the task they chose, students were encouraged, and often did, include props, costumes, music, internet media, and anything else they felt they needed to realize more fully the scene they were performing.

Final synthesis. After the presentations, which lasted approximately ten to fifteen minutes, came a final Day 4 activity aiming at synthesis of the film's plot lines with its messages. One of the most effective activities was a debate. Much as in the Day 2 debate, the class was divided in half, and the main conflict of the film was up for discussion. Much as in the Day 2 debate, the students were given a few minutes to work in their groups to identify their reasons for the position they were taking on the conflict. As the teacher I acted as the debate moderator, and the students argued their points and their stances. Students sometimes embodied the characters of the film, and at times they chose simply to play a character related to the conflict, not necessarily a character from the film—as, for example, a terrorist on one of the two conflicting sides presented in the film. In contrast to the Day 2 debate, whose aim was to allow students to verbalize their personal position on a conflict, a synthesis debate proved effective in helping the students understand a concept from a new point of view.

The exerpt

To exemplify a typical Day 4, I turn to a representative moment on the ninth class day of the semester. This sample comes from the fourth and final day of the film unit for the second film of the semester. As illustrated in the foregoing discussion, the fourth day of each film unit was a day in which the students were given an in-class assignment asking them to create a text of their own; they had to incorporate information from the film in a new and original way. On this particular day, during the last fifteen minutes of the lesson, the class was divided into small groups, and each group was asked to write a trailer for the film of this unit—a romantic coming-of-age comedy—as though it were of

a different film genre. I had them draw the genres out of a cup. Of the choices in the cup—*un film di fantascienza* (sci-fi), *un film d'azione* (action), *un dramma* (drama), *un giallo* (murder mystery), and *un film d'orrore* (horror)—they drew action, horror, and murder mystery. Following is a transcript from the group that drew action, which I include to exemplify the use of all linguistic resources in order to collaborate on the creation of a text in the L2.

Table 4.8: Day 4 transcription excerpt

Transcription	Translation
Cristina: *Oh god, OK. Cinque giorni degli esami. E, um… un amore perduto. A love lost. You know how it's like "a love lost" like kinda thing. Like put the headlines in there like*	**Cristina**: Oh god, OK. Five days to the exams. And, um…a love lost. A love lost. You know how it's like "a love lost" like kinda thing. Like put the headlines in there like
B: *[said in announcer voice] un amore perduto.*	**B**: [said in announcer voice] a love lost.
Cristina: *Yea, there! You got it right! A love lost, a dictator professor. Un professore dittatore.*	**Cristina**: Yea, there! You got it right! A love lost, a dictator professor. A dictator professor.
Alessandro: *Due T?*	**Alessandro**: Two Ts?
Cristina: *Sì. Uh, how do you say surprising?*	**Cristina**: Yes. Uh, how do you say surprising?
B: *Inaspettato*.	**B**: Surprising.
Cristina: *Un bambino, what?*	**Cristina**: A baby, what?
B: *Inaspettato.*	**B**: Unexpected.
Cristina: *Un bambino inaspettato. So it's like A love lost. A dictator professor. An unexpected baby. E?*	**Cristina**: An unexpected baby. So it's like A love lost. A dictator professor. An unexpected baby. And?
Alessandro: *Un terrorista!*	**Alessandro**: A terrorist!
Cristina: *Hee hee! You say it laughing! A revolt of students. Come si dice revolt? And then at the end of it, like which bomb will go off first? Brandi, how do you say to explode?*	**Cristina**: Hee hee! You say it laughing! A revolt of students. How do you say revolt? And then at the end of it, like which bomb will go off first? Brandi, how do you say to explode?
B: *Esplodere!*	**B**: To explode!
Cristina: *Quale bomba esplodera' prima? These are just like headlines.*	**Cristina**: Which bomb will explode first? These are just like headlines.

This exchange was chosen to highlight the students' use of both English and Italian in the creation of their assigned text, the movie trailer. The students work through the processing of the ideas using English, but then speak Italian aloud as they are writing the script for the trailer.

Here we see a pair of students in which one, Cristina, clearly dominated the verbal discussion. She was talking out loud through her ideas of how to write a trailer for the movie while Alessandro, her partner, wrote down what she was saying. She pulled from her prior knowledge about what typical film trailers are like, with the announcer's voiceover, what she called "headlines," and the types of action that one might expect from an action film. She moved easily and with confidence from English to Italian; she knew that for this task, the ideas were as highly valued and as important as the language itself, and she knew that she had the freedom to use all of her linguistic resources. Likewise, Alessandro, who did not participate verbally in this assignment, save two utterances, was very engaged in writing down Cristina's script. The use of verbal L1 and L2 and written L2 in this assignment sent a message to the students that the ideas were equally important as the form they took for the final product.

Additionally, we can see here these two students asking each other, and me, about language use. Cristina asked me a few times how to say certain words. She knew what she wanted to say, and she knew she had the freedom to ask me the Italian translations of vocabulary that she lacked. More interestingly, Alessandro, her partner, asked *her* about the spelling of the word "dittatore." Even though I was standing next to them listening to their conversation, Alessandro sought confirmation from Cristina, who had said the word,

not from me. By seeking her confirmation on the spelling of the word she had chosen, he simultaneously gave her authority on Italian language use and looked to her as a peer teacher. The classic notion of scaffolded learning is that an expert and a novice work together, (Vygotsky, 1978). In this case there is evidence that peer to peer discussion can be just as useful at times.

Now, I turn to another sample from the group who drew the horror film genre in order to illustrate how students collaborated, using both the L1 and L2, in order to construct a text showing their knowledge of the Italian language and of the generic conventions of the film trailer as text.

Table 4.9: Day 4 transcription excerpt

Transcription	Translation
Gianluca: *The teacher, they find out the teacher's a vampire. Professore, professore Martinelli il vampiro. We should have it start off to where like, you know how Luca tells off the teacher, the teacher [inaudible] the doors close and Signor Martinelli has like a gun or something. And Luca is able to break out but everyone else gets trapped in the school and all the teachers are vampires. We have to write in Italian though. It's awesome.*	**Gianluca**: The teacher, they find out the teacher's a vampire. Professor, Professor Martinelli the vampire. We should have it start off to where like, you know how Luca tells off the teacher, the teacher [inaudible] the doors close and Signor Martinelli has like a gun or something. And Luca is able to break out but everyone else gets trapped in the school and all the teachers are vampires. We have to write in Italian though. It's awesome.
Paolo: *Luca è nell'ufficio*	**Paolo**: Luca is in the office.
Gianluca: *Luca è nell'ufficio di Professor Martinelli. Loro stanno parlando*	**Gianluca**: Luca is in Martinelli's office. They are talking
Paolo: *Sci-fi! Aliens pop out of his chest.*	**Paolo**: Sci-fi! Aliens pop out of his chest.
Gianluca: *OK um, loro stanno parlando, they're talking. Hanno degli esami. Yea, we can, this is what they're doing, and then we can have like what the you know announcer says, "The last day of school. 5 years of hardship." 12 years in this case. OK.*	**Gianluca**: OK um, they are talking, they're talking. They have the exams. Yea, we can, this is what they're doing, and then we can have like what the you know announcer says, "The last day of school. 5 years of hardship." 12 years in this case. OK.

…	
Gianluca: '*Fine' is feminine, isn't it? Is fine feminine? La fine? Well, I mean.*	**Gianluca**: 'End' is feminine, isn't it? Is 'end' feminine? The end? Well, I mean.
Paolo: *Just say "l'ultimo giorno"*	**Paolo**: Just say "the last day"
Gianluca: *L'ultimo giorno di scuola e tutti degli studenti sono molto allegri e dopo gli esami tutti sono finiti con… So, last day of school and everyone's happy and after the exams everyone's finished with silly thoughts. Con l'educazione. O loro sono pensato cosi'. Dot dot dot*	**Gianluca**: The last day of school and all the students are very happy and after the exams they are all finished with… So, last day of school and everyone's happy and after the exams everyone's finished with silly thoughts. With education. Or so they thought. Dot dot dot
Tiziana: *Um, hanno pensato cosi'?*	**Tiziana**: Um, so they thought?
Gianluca: *Oh yea, I'm sorry. I'm retarded.*	**Gianluca**: Oh yea, I'm sorry. I'm retarded.

This excerpt, like the previous group, shows the students using English to discuss their ideas, and Italian to write the text. It is noteworthy that in both groups the first draft of the text the students are writing is in Italian, whereas often in the core language courses students first write extended discourse in English, and then translate.

A few key tenets of the Third Space are evident in this short exchange. First, the students moved fluidly between discussing grammatical issues and discussing the content itself. The Third Space is a space where new ways of knowing are highlighted; and this exchange suggests that the students are using the content of the text they are writing to understand grammatical concepts, and vice versa. Gianluca questioned whether the word *fine* (end) was masculine or feminine so that he could assign the correct definite article in writing the text. His group partners evidently did not know the gender of the word, so Paolo offered an alternative, "Just say *l'ultimo giorno*," which means "the last day". He understood that there were numerous ways of communicating the same idea, and he drew on what was available in his lexical repertoire to deliver the same message. Gianluca immediately incorporated this suggestion in the text. As in the previous group, Gianluca

authorized Paolo in this turn and validated his contribution as a knowing peer (van Lier, 2008).

Another moment of focusing on grammar occurred when Gianluca read aloud what he had written, and he said, "*loro sono pensato così*," (they thought so). Tiziana, the third group member, immediately corrected him saying "Um, *hanno pensato così*" (emphasis in original). Gianluca had used the wrong auxiliary verb in the construction of the present perfect verb "they thought." Gianluca responded "I'm sorry. I'm retarded," as if to say he should have known better than to make a mistake on such an elementary grammar rule. What is remarkable here is that this rule is not so elementary. Italian has two auxiliary verbs *to have* and *to be*. Although this particular construction is taught in the first semester of the core language courses, it is a construction with which students frequently struggle well beyond the first four semesters of language study. His reaction to having made this mistake hints at his socialization into a system that, even at the beginner level, demands complex grammatical accuracy, even when the message is clear.

In addition to their attention to grammatical detail, the students did incorporate both information from the film as well as their prior knowledge about the genre of horror films. As in the first group above, when speaking aloud the lines they had written, they did so in the stereotypical film voice-over style that is so common to American film trailers. They continued their discussion, adding the visual elements of the horror film genre:

Table 4.10: Day 4 transcription excerpt

Transcription	Translation
Tiziana: *We need slasher music though*	**Tiziana**: We need slasher music though
Gianluca: *We do! [makes the famous noise from the film Psycho]*	**Gianluca**: We do! [makes the famous noise from the film *Psycho*]
B: *One of you can just be in the background doing that noise.*	**B**: One of you can just be in the background doing that noise.
***Gianluca**: Yea! [all laugh] We can just flash to a scene with that. [makes sound effects] All the kids running through the halls smiling then like the doors slamming. [begins to reread Italian text they have created thus far]*	**Gianluca**: Yea! [all laugh] We can just flash to a scene with that. [makes sound effects] All the kids running through the halls smiling then like the doors slamming. [begins to reread Italian text they have created thus far]
Tiziana: *We need to show all the kids dancing around the swimming pool.*	**Tiziana**: We need to show all the kids dancing around the swimming pool.
B: *Oh, with the "Wild Boys!" Duran Duran, that's the perfect song!*	**B**: Oh, with the "Wild Boys!" Duran Duran, that's the perfect song!
Gianluca: *Oh that's what needs to happen. Something might need to happen at the party. Something bad.*	**Gianluca**: Oh that's what needs to happen. Something might need to happen at the party. Something bad.
B: *Suddenly you look at the pool and it's blood red.*	**B**: Suddenly you look at the pool and it's blood red.
Gianluca: *[with announcer voice] Someone poisoned the punch.*	**Gianluca**: [with announcer voice] Someone poisoned the punch.
B: *With blood.*	**B**: With blood.
Gianluca: *The punch is blood!*	**Gianluca**: The punch is blood!
B: *When Claudia's writing in her diary "la migliore sangria di tutto il tempo!"*	**B**: When Claudia's writing in her diary "the best sangria of all time!"
Gianluca: *Si'! Fantastico!*	**Gianluca**: Yes! Fantastic!
Tiziana: [laughing]	

This exchange shows the group processing the ideas they believed should be included in the text. They discuss what visual and audio clues should be included in the trailer to contribute to the overall message of the text. Again, they discuss the ideas in English before committing them to the Italian text.

Gianluca and Tiziana offered suggestions on what they viewed as typical elements of a horror film: scary sound effects and supernatural events, such as doors in a long hallway slamming shut. In this particular segment, they were thinking less about the verbal language required for their trailer, and more about the visual language required to represent a horror film. These ideas, which were of utmost importance to the task, were discussed in English in their group. I allowed this exchange to happen in the L1 for two essential reasons. First, I knew that they were already using Italian as they had already begun to write part of the script, in Italian. Second, I wanted to highlight that the ideas and the thought process of creating this text were equally important as the final product. Whatever linguistic resources they had at their disposal for the activity were accepted; what was important was their collaborating to create their own text based on the information from the class film and from their prior knowledge of film genres.

My participation in this conversation was only momentary; I circulated around the room visiting each group as they worked on their trailers. My use of English in this segment confirmed to the students that it was encouraged to work through the ideas using all available resources, all mediating tools. The students knew that the final product had to be in Italian, but the process of arriving at the final product involved a wider variety of linguistic tools, and as the teacher, I encouraged accessing all of mediating tools that were available to them—the L1, the L2, and their sound knowledge of the generic obligations of a film trailer.

As Gutiérrez (2008) mentioned, finding the Third Space of classroom interaction is about noting the points of "mutual attention, harmony, conflict, and disruption" (p.

152). She spoke of the "short cycles of learning that [hold] the potential for deeper or transformative forms of learning" (p. 152). These Day 4 excerpts, which are representative of all Day 4s, reveal short cycles of learning in which the students practiced and learned how to work as collaborators to create their own text, which was based on information that came from the target culture, but was adapted to fit in their own negotiated view of what it meant to be a learner of Italian in the United States. This kind of activity was a new form of classroom practice for the students, in comparison to the other language courses that they had taken at the university. Their insistence on grammatical accuracy coupled with their exploration of these ideas shows their process of negotiating the L1 and L2 cultures as well as the different classroom cultures they had experienced and, to some degree, appropriated.

Concluding Remarks on Classroom Interactions

To conclude this section, I summarize by answering the following questions:

- What sparked and sustained what Gutiérrez called "robust cycles of learning and interaction" (2008, p. 153)?
- What activities and pedagogical approaches contributed to acquiring what Gutiérrez called "new repertoires of practice" (2008, p. 150)?

The activities and classroom approaches that sustained on-task peer interaction were those activities that were open-ended, but framed within a clear set of parameters. In other words, activities that were not too open but not too closed allowed the students the appropriate support and sufficient autonomy to allow them to interact with one

another freely and constructively. The topics for such activities were triggered by the current discussions, leading to participation in conversation that was anchored by the previous class discussions and textual analyses. Furthermore, small group practice of ideas and language use before sharing with the whole class seemed to allow for free yet focused interaction among the students. This provided them the opportunity to try out certain ideas and linguistic constructions in the creation of meaning before sharing with the larger group the more rehearsed version.

These kinds of activities were also those that contributed to the students' expanded repertoires of language practice. Through dialogue with one another, the students worked to accomplish a specific goal as outlined by the activity (write a film trailer, elaborate orally on a fellow student's written comment, plan questions and responses for class debate, etc.) In this process, the students experienced the co-construction of knowledge with their peers in which they substantiated their ideas by the information available to them in the text along with the class discussions about the various discourses that could be found in that text. They learned that there is not always a right answer; through discussion and interaction with other learners the students had the power and authority to find their own interpretations to authentic pieces of media text. In sum, the structured but open-ended activities that encouraged discussion and negotiation of ideas, the students learned that they were able users and interpreters of the L2.

In the next chapter I describe the students' perceptions on how these robust cycles of learning and expanded repertoires of practice shaped and evolved their understanding of what it means to learn a foreign language.

Chapter 5

THEMES

This chapter of the findings turns to the analysis of students' self-assessments and post-course interviews in order to examine their perceptions about language and culture learning and to see the ways in which they began to identify their Third Space as individuals and as a group. Rather than organizing this section based on the classroom structure of each film unit, as in Chapter 4, I present three major themes that were found in my two additional data sets, the three self-assessments and the interview, that reflect the students' perception of the Third Space and their development in learning about culture that occurred in the class. The three themes I will focus on are 1) how the students' desire to express their personal opinions and feelings fostered language acquisition and authentic peer interaction; 2) their confidence as users of the L2; and 3) and the use of film as mediation for developing linguistic proficiency and awareness of patterns in cultural representations. These themes, while stated more or less explicitly by the students in their interviews and self-assessments, are also evident in excerpts of the classroom interactions provided in Chapter 4. In fact, the students' comments in their self-assessments were based largely on reflections about their classroom interactions. I will make reference to relevant portions of the classroom transcripts from Chapter 4 in certain portions of the discussion in this chapter.

The self-assessments reveal how students were experiencing the class as it was in progress. The interviews focused primarily on the students' retrospective thinking about

those experiences. In addition to expanding on the themes found in the self-assessments, the interviews provided information about the students' lasting impressions of the course. The analysis of student perceptions will be discussed in terms of these dominant themes but also include counter examples. In Chapter 6, I specifically address how these insights reflect a Third Space.

Self-assessments were an assignment given to the students that weighed 10% of their class grade. They were asked to write one to two pages in English describing their goals for the course, their goals as language learners overall, their experiences in language learning, their experiences in the class, and other relevant insights they wanted to share with me. They wrote three assessments throughout the semester: the first after two weeks of class, the second at mid-term, and the third that was due on our last day of class. In addition to the topics above, for the second and third assessments, they were asked to listen to the audio recordings of the class, which were made available on Blackboard at the end of each class period, and to comment on their own perceptions of their speaking and interactions with their classmates.

The interviews were conducted in February 2009—almost one calendar year after our class began. I asked the students to follow up on some of the comments they had made in their self-assessments, and on specific classroom moments. In conjunction with this inquiry, for this I replayed the audio recording of that segment to refresh their memories. The interviews served two purposes: 1) to allow students to reflect on their initial perceptions about the class and their participation in it; and 2) to provide a

member-check for the validity of my analysis of the findings I had drawn from their self-assessments. (see Chapter 3 for sample interview questions.)

The three major themes that represent the dimensions of foreign language in the Third Space as characterized by the students are self-expression, confidence, and the use of film. Note that I borrow this terminology from the students. In the self-assessments and interviews, the terms *self-expression, confidence,* and *film* were the three major categories that the students claimed were important to their processes of learning Italian and learning about Italian culture. Therefore, the following three sections will be labeled using the students' terms, and each section has sub-sections, which elaborate the various references the students found for discussing the importance of self-expression, confidence, and the use of film to their development as foreign language users. I will now discuss those findings that at times overlap, revealing the integrated nature of the students' perceptions and the need to merge the self-assessment and interview data.

SELF-EXPRESSION

> "Being able to communicate in a language is much more than just responding with words. I think language is closely linked to our emotions, and it is important for us to be able to really express what we feel" (Alessandro, third self-assessment).

Self-expression was a common theme that arose from both the self-assessment and interview data. Indeed, in many of the second and third self-assessments of the semester, the students generally stated that the opportunity to express themselves was useful for them. They did not explain much beyond this assertion, and so during the interviews I asked the students to elaborate. From the self-assessments and the six

interviews conducted, self-expression appeared to be related to three distinct areas: language acquisition, confidence, and peer interaction.

Self-Expression and Language Acquisition

The students indicated that the desire and opportunity to express their convictions increased their linguistic proficiency. The first reason their linguistic proficiency was perceived to have increased is that in Italian to express opinions and conjectures requires the use of complex grammatical structures. The frequency with which we discussed opinions and ideas in the conversation class prompted learners to rely on these complex grammatical constructions. In particular, the students became more practiced in the use of the subjunctive mood, which, in Italian, is used in four separate tenses. This structure is only taught in the last two weeks of the second semester of the core language sequence (the students' prerequisite class for enrollment in the conversation course). However, learners are expected to be familiar with it and use it regularly in the third semester of the core sequence. In our class, many of the statements we made required the use of the subjunctive for effective communication of ideas. As Gianluca explained in his interview,

> …in [the second semester we got] a little taste of the *congiuntivo* at the end of the semester and that was that. And here we were in [the third semester] and there's so many, like, '*mi sento che, penso che'* you know 'I feel that, they feel that, they think that'… I felt like that was, your class really, like right now I just really don't even think twice when I, you know, doing *congiuntivo* I don't even think twice. And your class definitely definitely gave everybody who was taking [the third semester] that self-assurance, that reassurance they needed. And I could definitely definitely tell a difference between people who were taking the [conversation class] and people who weren't whenever we were in [the

> third semester] class. Just with those specific exercises especially. And you could even, you know, in talking in general.

In similar interview observations, students stated that having the opportunity and the prompts to use subjunctive forms to say things that they personally wanted to say gave them an advantage in learning these structures.

Circumlocution was another way in which the need for self-expression seems to have prompted language acquisition. Amalia stated in her interview, "Self expression kind of forces you to look at other ways of saying things because you might not know the right way." Because the class discussions were not organized around a scripted text or a set of pre-determined themes or categories, the students could not prepare exactly what they wanted to say in class. Instead, at each class, we were engaging in spontaneous discussions, which themselves determined where the topic would continue. As a result, students had to think on their feet about what they wanted to say. Often they lacked the specific vocabulary or idiomatic expressions to communicate their ideas, and so they had to find within their own linguistic reserves other ways of expressing themselves. Amalia further explained in her interview, "you might not know how to say something the right way so you'll try a whole other way to say it… A lot of times when I was trying to say something I really had no idea how to say it so I kind of went around the sentence. So that kind of made me become more creative with my language." It is evident here that not knowing precisely the most efficient or effective way to say something need not prevent one from making the comment. During the interview, when I asked Amalia if she felt the opportunity to develop this sense of self-expression in other Italian classes, she responded, "No, not really. In the other classes you either said it right or you didn't;

you either wrote it right or you didn't. There wasn't really a different way to say things. The writing classes feel more in the box." Note that by "writing classes" Amalia clarified in our interview that she was referring to the core language courses (neither the core languages courses nor our conversation class include a substantial writing component).

Similarly, Cristina commented in the interview that the core language courses were more "stifling" with a strong focus on academics and little opportunity for self-expression. In contrast, the conversation class allowed her to "play with [her] knowledge and play with the language," (Cristina, interview). The students, it can be said, saw the need for circumlocution as an opportunity to take stock of what knowledge they did have and to use that as best they could to express themselves. This, according to Amalia and Cristina, led to a more creative way of thinking about how to use one's L2.

Finally, as a result of the students' increased practice in the complex syntax involved in expressing opinions and making hypotheses, along with their greater ability to find appropriate ways of communicating their message spontaneously, students felt that they had become the "leaders" in the third-semester course, in which they were concurrently enrolled. That third-semester course did require some peer conversation and some whole-class discussions. Though these classes were not as unscripted as the discussions in the conversation class were, they still asked the students to speak spontaneously about certain topics. It was particularly in this respect that Gianluca himself and his classmates who were also in our conversation class became the "leaders" in the required Italian course.

Self-Expression and Confidence

The second important area in which students felt that self-expression was an important aspect of the class was its relation to confidence. Students entered the class at the beginning of the semester with at least one year's worth of Italian courses that demanded grammatical and lexical accuracy. In their previous coursework, the textbook determined the topics of discussion, written or spoken. In our class, the students quickly realized that, because we had no textbook, we would have to create our own topics of discussion, based on the films and other texts read throughout the term. In expressing one's opinions, thoughts, feelings, and ideas about the given text and topic, students began to experience the importance of communicating the message over grammatical and lexical precision. After a few weeks had passed, they understood that I would not penalize them for syntactic or lexical errors. Rather, I would help them as much as was required to communicate their ideas in a way that everyone could understand. With the pressure on grammar removed, their anxiety about speaking aloud lessened.

Subsequently, with the building of our own dialogues in class, they began to understand that their ideas were of great value to the discussions. These two realizations coupled together gave them a greater sense of overall confidence as users of the target language and as active members of a discussion community. For some students, the sheer desire of wanting to communicate their thoughts began to trump the anxiety they felt about making mistakes in their utterance. Amalia noted in the interview, "I don't know if it has to do with overcoming confidence, but I think it just makes you not let

yourself stop and think about it." Frequently, interviews addressed the confidence issue in terms of "pride". For example, Paolo observed,

> it was not so much gaining confidence as it was suppressing your pride. Because I was so worried that the other people would think I was stupid because I couldn't speak it. But then once you actually spoke—I mean everyone knew how to do it, they were just afraid to do it. That mental block just prevented it (interview).

Similarly, earlier in the semester, another student, Claudio, also said, "I tend to only want to say things when I am pretty sure I am right, but I need to become less prideful and just speak up regardless of whether or not I think I might look foolish," (second self-assessment). Regardless, the students realized that by expressing themselves in meaningful and discursive ways they were "actually responding and thus having conversation with [their] peers in the class… in Italian, which is great, obviously," (Tommaso, self-assessment 2). In other words, the students' identities began to shift from language learners who were focused on grammatical accuracy in their utterances to language users who expressed their personal convictions, valuing the content of their contribution over the grammar.

Along these lines, another way the students' confidence was increased by self-expression was through the sequenced activities for each film unit. With each day of the film unit, we connected our current discussions back to our previous dialogues from the days or weeks before. Their self-expression led to a highly contextualized understanding of the texts. They found this useful in two distinct ways. First, it offered them a chance to repeat language that they had already used; they had the chance to practice expressing their thoughts in different ways across time. Second, it allowed them to become more

intimately familiar with the topic. With each passing day, the connections to our previous discussions went into greater detail, as students proceeded from description and opinion statements to nascent expression of their own and each other's interpretations of the text.

Gianluca contrasted this approach to text discussion with the approach taken in the third semester core course, which he explained in our interview:

> There were some things about [the readings] that were annoying. Like every day having a reading to do that you knew you were going to be tested orally over whereas, you know, no discussion about it beforehand so you don't even know if you, you know, know what's going on in the reading.

He felt that it was unrealistic to assume that the students would understand not only the language of the reading, but also its meanings, themes, goals, and cultural references well enough to hold a sustained discussion about them. This uncertainty created a sort of paralysis when it came time to share one's analysis of the text with the core class. In his interview, Gianluca explained that in the conversation class,

> I think it most goes back to students' receiving new information on that initial day, and just people, not necessarily not understanding what exactly it is but just... After hearing more and more insight from the other students and from the teacher, that's when people are going to start opening up.

Given the relaxed time frame of the conversation class, the students expressed confidence due to their space in which to revisit past discussions to inform the direction of their discourse. They also had a sense of authority due to the fact that we created our own dialogue. We were not following a textbook. Rather, the films guided us into becoming the creators of the content that we shared and learned. This made them feel in control of their own learning.

Self-Expression and Peer Interaction

The third way that self-expression was important to the students was in its relation to peer interaction. Van Lier (2004) discussed the nature of interactions among peers as a basis for improving language use.

> It is often assumed—among students and teachers alike—that interaction among equal peers will not lead to improvements in learning. After all, for learning to occur a more advanced learner's input or judgment will be necessary, or so the argument goes. This is actually not at all the case: so long as there are sufficient examples of target language use (cues) in the environment, learners amongst themselves can orient to those cues and act upon them appropriately in interactions (p. 101).

Students in the conversation course supported van Lier's assertion, but attributed the benefits of peer interaction to particular aspects of our classroom atmosphere that allowed them to connect with one another, thus contributing to the creation of the Third Space. In both self-assessments and student interviews, comments on peer interlocution stressed the importance of authentic relationships with their classmates based on an authentic need to express one's convictions. Increasing familiarity with one another as individuals inspired peers to open up to one another more than often allowed in more prescriptive Italian courses. In this way, Cristina said, "I think that it helps a lot that we do so much speaking in smaller groups before talking in front of everyone. Working in smaller groups has been a way for us to get to know each other as a class and we learn so much about each other" (Cristina, second self-assessment). Other classmates noted that although they did not know each other prior to our class, they became friends in the class.

This closeness as individuals was, in the students' perceptions, one direct result of having shared their ideas and histories with one another in the class.

Furthermore, through peer interaction they were able not only to articulate their thoughts, but to refine and complete their ideas. The students quickly realized that, as the teacher, I did not have all the answers and that they could learn about Italian language and culture from one another. Alessandro explained, "I believe we will learn a great deal from each other because people have ways of saying things through their own perspectives as compared to the general answers or responses written in books" (Alessandro, first self-assessment). Already at the beginning of the semester, Alessandro understood that learning from authentic dialogue would be different than learning scripted dialogue from a textbook. Gianluca said in an interview, "the spontaneous discussions we had were, you know, just saying what it is that you know and trying to learn something in return" (Gianluca, interview). Gianluca and Alessandro were ready to learn from one another; they were not dependent on me as the teacher to expand their knowledge of the Italian language and culture. Even on a purely linguistic level, we saw an example of peer teaching in the Day 4 excerpt given in Chapter 4 where the students ask one another questions about grammar and vocabulary. They learned that they could learn from each other through their interactions.

The final important connection that the students saw between self-expression and peer-interaction was that they had a strong desire to communicate their ideas with one another. Not only did they have the freedom to explore their ideas and to learn from one another, but the different peer reactions to the details and messages in the films and

supplemental texts led them to have strong opinions that they urgently wanted to share with the class. Amalia explained, "it really does help if you watch or read anything that you have a strong opinion about you're gonna want to force yourself to talk about it. I remember a couple of times I was literally bursting at the seams to say something because I was just like, 'I really want to get this across, I don't care if it's wrong, I just have this opinion that I want to share'" (interview).

The focus on the act of communicating one's thoughts meant that Amalia was not concerned whether her grammar was correct, she was more concerned about the ideas. She explained that if at first she tried to say something that the class did not understand, she would find within herself another way to engage in circumlocution. Gianluca also noted that a focus on ideas in contrast to syntax was freeing: "in your class there was never a wrong or a right answer, but there was always an answer to be given" (interview). Again, here we see the focus on the content, on the desire to communicate one's thoughts and opinions in whatever way the class could make sense of it.

As educated young adults, these students brought to the class a wealth of knowledge and complexity often inadvertently discouraged in beginning and intermediate level language classrooms, due simply to the inhibitions about their linguistic capacity to express that cognition. In our conversation class, the students were given the opportunity to try their best to discuss complex ideas such as social class differences, race and immigration issues, the socio-political context of the rise of mafia gangs in Italy, war and colonization, and the coming of age in Italy, in an environment that focused on ideas rather than language accuracy. For many, this was the first time in their L2 histories that

they had been encouraged to discuss such matters in class, and they realized over time that they were in fact capable of communicating about these topics. To be sure, their grammar and vocabulary were faulty. However, as a group of learners at similar linguistic levels, they found within themselves the resources they needed to communicate their ideas about these issues. Gianluca explained,

> Talking about abstract ideas is like talking about something that you don't have the words for. So, when we're thrown a topic and we had to respond, we had to come up with whatever way we could to talk about these abstract ideas, these ideas that were unfamiliar to us. So, we learned how to talk around and we realized how much we did know versus how much we didn't. Being comfortable expressing something that you aren't 100% confident or familiar with. And just getting past that point of, it doesn't matter if I'm wrong, I'll just do my best here. Talk about it, get as much information across as we can, and see if they can figure it out. You know, thinking about synonyms and how you can relate something you know to something you're unfamiliar with, and learn something in the process. (interview).

Many of the issues discussed in my analyses are reflected in this quote, such as the value of opportunities to engage in circumlocution and the confidence gained by expressing convictions to peers. Most importantly, however, is the idea that in attempting spontaneously to communicate abstract ideas with a less than advanced level language capacity, the students became cognizant of how much they did in fact know. Because they were in a space that encouraged use of "words and phrases on the spot", they discovered "what really showcases [their] knowledge in Italian" (Claudio, second self-assessment). Through the process of expressing themselves authentically with their peers, the students began to shift their awareness of themselves away from "studiers about the language" to "able users of the language," (Thorne, S., personal communication, March 5, 2009).

CONFIDENCE

"Nobody wants to come in the first day and say something and have it be totally wrong" (Gianluca, interview).

In conjunction with impressions about language use in the conversation course, the second closely related major theme that arose from the self-assessment and the interview data was that of confidence. Most students in their first self-assessments stated that increasing their confidence in spoken Italian was one of their major goals for the semester. It is common for beginning language learners to feel anxiety around spontaneous speech production. This group of students had been socialized into a way of learning Italian that greatly valued grammatical accuracy, and thus I believe this anxiety was heightened. Cristina said, "I think that one of the reasons that I do not feel comfortable when speaking Italian is that I focus too much on which verb tense to use and the grammatical correctness of what I am saying" (Cristina, first self-assessment). She had been trained to focus heavily on the syntax and lexicon so that the content of what she had to say was secondary to the form the utterance took. I have argued that confidence was a key component in prompting students' self-expression and to their resultant language acquisition and development of a Third Space. Here I will focus more closely on confidence in its relation to affordances, and to peer interaction.

Confidence and Affordances

The notion of affordance is originally an ecological term referring to the relations of possibility between animals and their environments (van Lier, 2004). One does not

have to stretch the imagination to see how this definition is also true for users of a foreign language in a classroom setting. In particular, van Lier lists three defining features of the concept of affordance:

> a) An affordance expresses a relationship between a person and a linguistic expression (a speech act, a speech event); it is *action potential*; it is a *relation of possibility*… b) linguistic affordances are specified in the linguistic expression, and available to the active interlocutor (or addressee) who may pick up one or more of those affordances as they are relevant at the moment; c) the affordances picked up serve the agent—depending on his or her abilities—to promote further action and lead to higher and more successful levels of interaction (p. 95).

For purposes of this study, like van Lier, I define affordance as that which is available to the student to do something with. In other words, what elements in the environment are available and relevant at a given moment that inspires a student to engage in a significant verbal transaction with another student. In this study I have identified two major elements that, according to the students, afforded them the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation with the class: small class size (and small group work) and authentic topics of conversation.

First, the small class size (ten students), and even more importantly, the small group assignments within the class, allowed the students to relax and not feel threatened by a room full of students judging their language abilities. "I think it is very helpful to have group discussions where we can feel free to make grammatical mistakes without any severe penalties. This allows us to feel more comfortable, and it increases are [*sic.*] confidence in our ability to speak the language" (Alessandro, second self-assessment). In small group work, the students at first needed only to make themselves understood by the other one or two students in their group. The conversation class was more of an intimate

setting than the core language courses, to be sure, but at the same time, the comfort they began to feel in small groups allowed them to practice using the language in a worry-free environment.

Several students commented that this feeling then transferred to the class as a whole. Not only in the small group assignments, but in whole-class discussion the goal of practicing to use the language was at the forefront of our conversations. Participants were aware that the same tone as in the small group work had been set for the whole class. "The classroom environment…was a place that you could actually make a mistake, Italian-speaking wise, and not be reprimanded by a class session of '*Giusto o Non Giusto?*'… Unfortunately, this is what I had to deal with in [the core language course], and significantly set me back confidence wise," (Tommaso, third self-assessment). Tommaso explained here that in his previous coursework in Italian one of the features that significantly lowered his confidence level was the formal invitation for the class to judge the grammaticality of an utterance. "*Giusto o Non Giusto*" (Correct or Incorrect) was, for Tommaso, the theme of his previous coursework. In focusing on language use in the conversation class, on the other hand, the students were given the space to make mistakes. Errors in syntax were tolerated as long as participants could speak intelligibly about their opinions and interpretations of the texts at hand.

This practice accounted for a second way in which affordances contributed to greater speaker confidence: through authentic conversation. We have already seen how self-expression led to increases in the ability to circumlocute, to find other ways of expressing one's thoughts. Just as the students were afforded the opportunity to play

with words in order to express their ideas, similarly they had the opportunity to play with their ideas. "In [the conversation class] we learned a lot but at the same time we were kind of allowed to play with it, I guess, in a way. We were allowed to play with our knowledge and kind of like experience it in different ways like with the radio and the movies and different stuff like that" (Alessandro, interview). The different modalities of learning in the class inspired different learning outcomes and different experiences of the content.

Each of these modalities of textual representation (e.g., film, music, news articles) and different tasks and objectives for dealing with these modalities provided a different form of mediation, a different tool that the students could use to understand the language and content within the text. Images, sounds, narrative twists, dialogues, and action each contributed in their own way to situate the learning. These, in turn, inspired, or perhaps even required the students to create different forms of the language themselves. We can see examples of such changes in language use in the Day 3 and 4 classroom excerpts provided in Chapter 4. In Day 3, the students were to use their own comments, in print form, as the basis for further discussion, resulting in a very specific kind of talk. Students questioned, shared, and in some cases challenged one another's ideas in exchanges such as "No, but the point is that…" and "I agree with you, but…" In Day 4, on the other hand, the students were to use the film as the basis for their creation of a movie trailer. For this task, they utilized a more filmic "mock up" language including incomplete clauses, tones of voice, connection with images, and possible musical soundtracks all

contributing to their own text. These texts were the students' own original creations, but their variety is evident in the textual forms on which they were modeled.

Another way the students recognized the affordance of authentic conversation topics and its relation to confidence is that in the class the focus was taken off the practice of speaking and placed more heavily on the cultural content and on the expression of one's convictions. Ironically, the focus on content resulted in greater production of linguistically complex utterances. Because the student was freed from the focus on producing the perfect utterance, s/he experienced more to space to share complex ideas in the L2, ideas that require greater proficiency in more advanced linguistic structures. Amalia said, "the [conversation] class applied more to Italian culture and made you feel more the cultural part versus the actual speaking. And I think that's what made it more comfortable to *speak* the language because you were very much, like, felt more a part of what you were learning. Kind of an immersion in a way" (Amalia, interview, emphasis in original). By focusing on what was being said rather that the fact that it was being said aloud in a classroom with a group of other Italian language learners, Amalia felt that she had the space to become more integrated with what she was saying, and this led to an increase in use, albeit at times faulty, of complex linguistic structures. To "feel a part of what [one is] learning" means to integrate the whole of oneself into the learning tasks. This took the focus off one singular part—the act of speaking aloud—and placed it more on the communicative experience as a whole.

Showing more explicitly how the authenticity of the dialogue led to a feeling of self trust and confidence, Amalia continued,

> In the written class [i.e. required language courses in Italian] you might know all the strategic structures and everything like that but you'll seriously struggle with just speaking it. Versus in our class we had a terrible grammar and you know we couldn't say things right at all sometimes, but *you felt* more confident and *a part of something*…And really we said so much. Even when the subjects were hard and you didn't know how to say most of the stuff you said, you were still getting across these really important points. Versus *you wouldn't even bother trying in a written class, because you know it's going to be wrong*, (interview, emphasis mine).

Note again that by "written class," Amalia was referring to the core language courses as a stark contrast to the core courses and the conversation class. In the core courses, the students were not afforded the opportunity to express themselves in a way that was true to their identities. She attributes their silence in those classes to a disconnect of their authentic selves with their classroom selves. By contrast, in the conversation class, she saw that not separating the genuine self with the classroom learning tasks led to a more open and integrated self in the classroom tasks. The students communicated "so much"; despite the barrier of morphosyntactic accuracy, they shared their convictions with one another.

Claudio offered another perspective on the students' identities as shared among a group of learners, a community of language users sharing a common goal. He said, "The opportunities given to increase my fluency and confidence are priceless, and I really don't see where else I could have found what we had in this class; a group of students mainly at the same level who, once they became comfortable around each other, really opened up and were supportive of each other's goal to become better at speaking Italian" (Claudio, third self-assessment). In his view, the authentic activities and dialogue created

in the class led to authentic relationships with one another. The outcome was a sense of community support and solidarity where the learning goals were shared.

As one final note on affordances, I feel it is necessary to discuss further what Lucia and I called, "the *Saturno contro* moment."[3] *Saturno contro* is the name of the fourth film of the semester. As provided in the Day 3 excerpt given in Chapter 4, the "*Saturno contro* moment" is the moment when Lucia declared that she could not go on talking about what she was saying in Italian and she asked if she could do so in English. I allowed it because, at the time I knew that she was passionate about what she was saying (it was evident in her facial expressions and overall body language). I also assumed that what she would have to say would sustain the active participation and lively conversation about the film. As those data show, despite her using English to express her strong emotions and opinions, the conversation did continue in Italian, suggesting that the use of the L1 need not necessarily be a negative influence on L2 interaction; it can, in fact, mediate second-language use in important ways, (Brooks, Donato & McGlone, 1997). Lucia's use of English did not hinder the conversation in the L2 for the rest of the class. All of the students and I continued our conversation in Italian for the remainder of the class period. So, the brief use of L1 to express one idea important to one speaker did not seem to have any negative affect on the choice of L2 for the remainder of that class period. Instead, the class saw the content of her contribution as an important part of their co-construction of meaning about the film.

[3] A discussion referring to the same classroom interaction was already addressed in Chapter 4 in the context of the overall nature of the Day 3 interaction among the whole group of participants.

During the interview I asked her why she used English in her *Saturno contro* moment. She said, "That's easy to answer. It's because I was really emotional and I feel very passionate about this topic and I'm always having to—as a lesbian I'm always having to show the normalcy of being a lesbian. And I feel like many times people act like it's not normal, and it's more normal than they think. So, I'm always fighting for that. So, when that happened I felt like I needed to do that again." I then asked her, due to the potentially controversial nature of what she had to say, if she felt that our classroom was one in which she felt comfortable sharing something so personal about herself. She answered, "I knew that it was OK to say it there because we were having the discussion, you opened the floor for us and I knew I could talk about it. So, in that sense, yes, it was an environment that welcomed that kind of discussion" (interview, emphasis mine).

One of the major features of van Lier's discussion of affordance is the connecting of emotions to potential action. Lucia's utterance, though in English, was entirely appropriate and relevant to the dialogue the students were creating. Moreover, she felt the strong emotional need to express her thought in a complete and comprehensible way. She was afforded the space to do so, and so she acted. In return, she provided affordances for the other students to further discuss, to open up, to feel close to one another, and to feel real. It is through interactions like this that the students learned how to learn and act together, which brings me to the connection of confidence to peer interaction.

Confidence and Peer Interaction

One of the most salient connections that students saw between confidence and interaction with one another was that they learned through their own mistakes and through others' mistakes.

"Throughout the semester I have learned that everyone is nervous about messing up in front of each other, but the only way to improve is to screw up, figure out what you are screwing up, and try to fix it" (Claudio, third self-assessment). Students felt that the more mistakes the students made, and subsequently learned from, the more confident they felt in participating in discussions that were focused on content (i.e. the less anxiety they had about participating).

Amalia corroborated this idea when she said,

> I think what was good about the class was that you knew everyone else was like messing up too. Even when they didn't mess up you kind of were able to feel like you were on par with everybody else. Like even if some people accelerated faster than others you felt like you were part of the same learning group and you weren't really left too far behind. You kind of have the same growing with everybody else (interview).

This comment challenges the idea that only a native, or at least more-knowing, other is a useful interlocutor. Students were often aware if another student was making an error or not. However, they did not fear emulating a model that was not grammatically and lexically perfect. They realized that there was still much to learn from one another in terms of content knowledge: "They have the same exact feeling that you do. So it's like, 'OK I know you're feeling the same way so let's just not feel that way… We're going to make mistakes, let's just help each other out as we go" (Gianluca, interview).

When asked if he felt his level of confidence had changed throughout our class Gianluca responded,

> Oh, I think it definitely changed throughout the class, like, as the class went on. Because somebody would say something and I felt a lot of, um, I felt like everybody in the class just grew a lot closer throughout the semester. And so I—students as a whole didn't feel as inconfident [*sic.*] about challenging someone else's opinion or adding to or just having a remark on it. It's like 'I don't know you I've never taken Italian with you before. You know, I don't want to offend you or something'" (interview).

We see here that, at least according to Gianluca, not only was peer interaction useful in lowering anxiety about making errors in syntax or lexicon, but also about commenting on the content of what someone else said. It was through interacting with one another that the students came to understand each other's histories and perspectives. They began to recognize the others' values and beliefs as important aspects in the co-construction of knowledge about the texts studied. This new dimension of language learning contributed to the Third Space that was created in the conversation class—a space where ways of knowing and learning were expanded, leading to a transformation of the students' perceptions about the endeavor of language learning.

At the beginning of this sub-section on confidence, I quoted Gianluca's words, "Because nobody wants to come in the first day and say something and have it be totally wrong." Now, after having seen how the students' confidence increased due to the freedom they had to express themselves, to the affordances they recognized and acted upon, and to their interactions with their peers, I can now share his follow up to his concern about being "totally wrong", "But, towards the end I felt like a lot of people *did do* that more because that was the point of the class, and it goes back to, there was never

a wrong answer. And everyone's a lot closer at that point. Like, I don't care if that person thinks if I'm an idiot for saying this. It doesn't matter, we all are experiencing this together" (emphasis in original). In sum, certain measures in the conversation course design were in place for the students' confidence levels to be high enough that they could begin to practice using the language and living through the language dynamically, rather than merely studying about the language as a monolithic object. Through their expanded awareness of the resources available to them via their classmates, the students defined their Third Space through their genuine interactions with one another.

USE OF FILM

> "You understood the culture you were studying better. And because of that you felt like you were a part of it" (Amalia, interview).

The use of film throughout the semester proved an important element of the class in many areas. Three that I will address here are its relationship to language acquisition, learning about culture, and the development of multiple literacies.

Film and Language Acquisition

Many students commented both in their self-assessments and in the interviews on the utility of film as a tool for learning the Italian language. "I do believe…that listening to Italian music and watch [*sic.*] the Italian movies have helped me get a grasp on the structure of the Italian language" (Paolo, second self-assessment). It was not the pronunciation or necessarily specific vocabulary the participants noted, but rather the

overall flow of the language, and the notion of regional differences, dialects, and sociolects within Italy. Students found that the contextual and situated representation of the language helped identify these structures and varieties. Alessandro wrote about two films in particular that he found most helpful to his language learning:

> These films were very interesting, and I felt that they helped me the most in understanding the language. I think the reason they helped me the most is because these two films showed the many aspects of relationships. In these films you see love, friendship, greed, and betrayal, but you also get to see other more controversial aspects of life. For example, in *Saturno contro* I was able to see a gay relationship and how society reacted to it. By seeing how people expressed their thoughts with something other than '*mi piace o no, non mi piace*' [I like it or no, I don't like it] really helped me out…I was able to see what people would say and do in many different situations. (Alessandro, third self-assessment)

This statement illustrates how, for this student, contextualized language came alive because it expressed an authentic Italian discourse. According to Alessandro, then, the modality of the text (film, book, radio, etc.) had an effect on how that text was understood and received by the learner. As Barsalou (1999) noted, "…comprehension is grounded in perceptual simulations that prepare agents for situated action" (p. 77). In other words, when one can associate the language with authentic experiences, images, dialogues, goals, and actions—or situated learning—the learner is better equipped, and more motivated, to do the work of comprehending a complex piece of text.

As a further note on the use of film for language learning, Paolo noted the difference between the contextual language of film and the language of an L2 textbook: "We're so formulated. This word goes here, here, and here. And in the movies, it flows more, and you get used to how people actually word things. In English I don't speak exact structurally correct English. You just kind of get more of a feel of the flow of the

language instead of how to do each thing" (Paolo, interview). Returning to the notion of authentic topics and self-expression, the students had as a model the language as used in films. Paolo admitted that in his L1 he did not speak a prescriptive grammar, but rather his native language flows through him and comes out as the environment demands. He was able to see through the films that this is true for Italians as well, stating, "we learned how to talk like an Italian, because I talk Italian like an English person, but to actually talk Italian like an Italian is a different thing. So it kind of helps you understand more how to do that" (Paolo, interview).

In my interview of Gianluca, I asked him to follow up on a statement that he had made in his third self-assessment, which was that the conversation class gave him tools that would help lead him to fluency. I wanted to know more precisely what he thought those tools were. Much like Paolo's comment above about learning the Italian of the Italians, Gianluca answered, "the things that we did in the class that contributed most [to developing fluency] I'd say were the readings and the movies. *Things that come from Italian culture. Because without that actual Italian culture you're only going to get so far with your fluency*" (Gianluca, interview, emphasis mine). In all of the interviews and in 11 of the 22 total self-assessments students applauded the opportunity to learn how to use the language by reading and viewing texts that were produced by and for Italians. Most participants found that engaging in authentic interactions around authentic texts was a form of mediation that allowed them to become more integrated with the text and the activity.

Film and Culture

One of the most important discoveries that students made regarding learning a foreign culture was that culture refers not only to concrete facts about geography or monuments, or even daily habits and customs. They came to see that a larger component informing culture is a people's values and beliefs—a problematic notion, as values and beliefs cannot be generalized across an entire population. Within a given group of people there will be many different, and often competing, cultural literacies and systems of values and beliefs.

In the conversation class the students became aware of this dimension of cultural studies. Claudio said, "By watching Italian movies and then following them up with learning about their culture I do believe that I am gaining some valuable insight into their culture. There is no way that you can learn everything about Italian culture from watching their films, but it does let me see what they find funny, entertaining, and interesting" (second self-assessment).

Claudio was beginning to develop his own perception of Italian humor and entertainment values based on the films we viewed. Furthermore, he admitted that it is impossible to use the medium of film as a reliable source for learning all that there is to learn about a culture. In doing so, he identified a two-fold awareness of a new dimension of culture and of the value, yet potential unreliability, of the film medium as a source of information for culture learning. About six weeks later, he voiced a similar opinion about the utility of film as an education text, "…one of my favorite parts about this course has

been learning about Italian culture through their films. I was able to see what makes Italians laugh, cry, and feel happy" (Claudio, third self-assessment).

Another aspect of the films that the students found highly valuable was the visual representation of the country and its people. Cristina commented in the interview that the moving picture (as opposed to a still photograph with written text) was much more revealing of how Italians move and what their body language is like. Gianluca commented in the interview on the discussions of the different geographical regions in the core language textbooks. He expressed a sense of boredom at this representation of Italy, as he knew that there was much more to learn than simply the geographical locations and characteristics of each region of Italy.

Amalia said,

> The visual aid really makes a difference. Because, like, I know in the books they give you those little sections where they kind of tell you about Italy and what's going on in Italy, but really… if it's not for the test, you probably won't read it, but even more so, even if you do read it, you can't really picture it; you can't really relate it. You can't really have a clear idea of what that's like versus the movies—even though it's a movie and not real life—it really does show you a completely different way of looking at things. Not only how the movies are made, but like the filming style and the way they talk and the mannerisms. You really see the mannerisms. And it's not that they're acting, those are their actual mannerisms that Italians really do have. (interview)

Again, Amalia compared the film representation to the previous imagery she had received of Italy, "in the books…those little sections where they kind of tell you about Italy…" She confessed that those sections are often skipped (either by the students or by the class as a whole). The indication is that the focus of the core language classes is so much on the grammar that the students do not place a high priority on learning the culture

from "those little sections." Through the use of film, on the other hand, the students were able to hear the language as spoken by Italians in Italy, as well as see the body language, gestures, and facial expressions that accompany the language. This visual representation of Italians as living, breathing, moving, dialogic people opened the students' eyes to a new way of perceiving Italy and the Italians. In the interview, Amalia also mentioned that seeing the outdoor street scenes, or scenes shot inside a public establishment or a home gave her some insight into how Italy moves and how people live inside it. She commented on the speed and density of traffic in scenes of some films versus others, which she believed helped her feel more like she was there with the characters, a more authentic experience than that offered by a textbook.

The final way that culture was learned through film relates to stereotyping and making generalizations. The students at the beginning of the class did not have many specific pre-conceived notions about Italy or the Italians (or at least they did not share them with me or the class). Nonetheless, there is an indication that the students began to see Italians as a complex society with many regional, generational, and socio-economic variations, much as in the United States. In one of the in-class written assignments at the end of the semester, I asked the students to list a stereotype that they had themselves or that they had heard before and to explain whether that stereotype was confirmed or disconfirmed by what they saw in the films. Here are a few examples:

Table 5.1: Sample of student written comments about cultural stereotypes

Transcription	Translation
"*Prima questa la classe, sempre pensava che il stereotipo dei italiani che tutti italiani milanesi sono molto serie e non*	"Before this class, I always thought that the stereotype of Italians that all the Italians from Milan are very serious and not as fun

tanto divertente quanto italiani del sud ma nel film ho visto che i milanesi non sono molto freddi." (Bianca)	as the Italians of the South but in the film I saw that the Milanese were not very cold."
"C'è solo una lingua italiana. Falso." (Paolo)	"There is only one Italian language. False."
"Non pensavo che Italia ha 'i ghetti' come abbiamo nei Estati Uniti e era molto interessante a vedere i ghetti di Milano nel Fame chimica. *Quando sono andata a Milano tutti sembravano molto piacevole e non immaginavo che i ghetti come ho visto nel film esiste." (Cristina)*	"I didn't think that Italy had 'ghettos' like we have in the United States and it was very interesting to see the ghettos of Milan in *Fame chimica.* When I went to Milan everyone seemed very pleasant and I didn't imagine that the ghettos like I saw in *Fame chimica* existed."

By the end of the semester, when the students completed this worksheet, they did reveal some of their ideas about Italy and the Italians before entering the class. For many, views were changed through the use of film. The first example has to do with insights gained about Italians' personalities across the various regions of Italy. The films helped Bianca, for example, to develop a new perspective on the various behaviors and personalities of the Milanese. She recognized that a film is fictional representation, and the actors may not originally be from the region of the character they are depicting. It was, nonetheless, the contextualized representation of a people had changed this particular student's idea about geographically based personality differences within Italy. The second example, "There is only one Italian language. False," expresses Paolo's new awareness of the language varieties in Italy that had previously been non-existent in his mind. The core language courses did not focus on dialects, sociolects, accents, or other regional differences of the language. Indeed, most foreign language textbooks make no mention of linguistic variation.

The last example also reveals Cristina's development in making cross-cultural comparisons. The film *Fame chimica* dealt with the community living in a ghetto on the outskirts of Milan. The first two days of the film unit were dedicated to bringing to the table our existing notions of ghettos in the U.S. and in any other country we could think of. We then read some Italian newspaper articles about ghettos in certain northern Italian cities, a reality antithetical to Cristina's initial beliefs. Finally, before and after seeing the film, we discussed issues directly addressed by the film. This contextualization of the film, and the film itself, resulted in the student's questioning her previous understanding of a ghetto and where they were located in the world. She also had to reorganize her perception of Milan to allow for the existence of the ghetto depicted in the film.

In his observations of cross-cultural comparisons, Tommaso said, "I liked most of the movies…and I feel that they were a fun way to see different aspects of Italians and *how they are both different and similar to us and even themselves*" (Tommaso, third self-assessment). Although he did not offer specific examples of the differences and similarities that he saw between Italians and Americans, he was beginning to express an increased level of cognizance about the characteristics of different cultures across time and space. Certain aspects of different cultures are fundamentally different, whereas others are rather similar. Furthermore, he began to move away from his initial view of Italy as a homogenous state and toward a perception and understanding of the diversity within the country.

One very specific aspect of Italian culture that the students became aware of was the culture of the Italian film industry. There is evidence that the students developed an

insight into the generic conventions of film in the U.S. versus in Italy. As suggested by Amalia's comment above, "…even though it's a movie and not real life—it really does show you a completely different way of looking at things. Not only how the movies are made, but like the filming style…" (Amalia, interview).

Film and Evolving Multiple Literacies

Already I have presented some evidence of film as a tool for increasing multiple literacies. Paolo compared the language of a textbook to that of film, showing an awareness of different generic conventions. Furthermore, Claudio admitted that it is not possible to know everything about a culture from a film, thus showing his awareness of film as a fictional representation of a specific reality. In his final self-assessment he said, "…many [Italian] films are very similar to American films, they have a lot of drama, and all of the people in them are abnormally good looking" (Claudio, third self-assessment). This rather humorous statement about cross-cultural similarities in film suggests that not only did Claudio develop an understanding of the existence of different perspectives on film making, but also that different cultures can share a lot, even in their visual representations of a fictional reality. He demonstrated a cultural literacy on two separate planes: the national cultures of Italy and the United States, and the filmic culture as a global or cross-cultural phenomenon.

In the Day 1 excerpt provided in Chapter 4, we can see that although the execution of the task did not generate robust and sustained spontaneous interactions among the students, the activity (and others like it throughout every Day 1 in the

semester) did help to increase the students' awareness of the language of film. In her mid-term self-assessment, Amalia explained why she thought the study of film was a useful way to learn about the culture of a people. She said,

> One really good example is, of course, *Il Notte Prima degli Esami* because it gives a really relatable view of how high school is in Italy and the differences between our culture and theirs. Even *Romanze Criminale* was a very intriguing movie in that it shed light on a famous subject in Italy, "gangsters." Both of these movies I feel have given me a broad view of differences in how Italians are in real life, *how they act, how they portray life in the movies and even how they choose to film*. (second self-assessment, emphasis mine)

Whatever assumptions the students may have had at the beginning of the semester, this quote shows that already by the mid-point of the semester, the students were learning that films are representations of a reality, perhaps even a fictional reality. The fact that Amalia was learning "how [Italians] portray life in the movies and even how they choose to film" highlights her expanding awareness of film literacy and cross-cultural comparisons. Although her statement did not reveal a fully critically analytical view of film as a representation, it did point to a change in her awareness of film as a text with its own systems of meaning making.

The final literacy that I will discuss here is educational literacy. Through this class, students became aware of the ways that different classroom cultures create different kinds of learning; they developed an increased awareness of the multiple literacies of the academy. I have presented several examples of this throughout the themes section of the analysis. Several times students made comparisons of their learning experiences in the conversation class versus the core language courses. In

addition, as Amalia explained, "I feel like I'm taking a cross between an Italian class and a film class which makes it quite a lot of fun" (Amalia, second self-assessment).

The focus on the content in the conversation class moved the students out of the realm of taking just a language class; in addition, they were undertaking deductive learning about Italian culture and history, and about the film industry and film as a representative text, pregnant with meaning beyond that of the plot of the given picture. Bianca, the student majoring in Radio Television and Film, stated in her first self-assessment, "Give me a movie and I'll watch it in a heartbeat and can dissect it accordingly with ease. That's what I'm good at and what I enjoy as well. So this class turns out to be right up my alley which is very exciting for me" (Bianca, first self-assessment). Already at the beginning of the semester, this student understood that the nature of the course would involve film analysis. Indeed, Bianca's voice in the class was a useful resource for the other students in helping them learn the language and culture of film. The contribution exemplified how all of the students helped one another to learn the language and culture of Italy by identifying different language usages. At the same time, they reflected about the discursive and cultural characteristics of different types of classes within and across departments at the University of Texas.

Alessandro stated in one of his in-class worksheets, "*Prima la classe ho pensato che questi film fossero per educazione solo ma non è vero. Qualcune era divertente e felice e altre era seriouso e profondo. Ma ho ancora imparato molto."* [Before this class I thought that these films were for education only but it's not true. Some were fun and happy and others were serious and profound. But I still learned a lot.] Alessandro had

not imagined that the films of the class would have been films originally produced for entertainment purposes in Italy only; rather, he was expecting educational films. In the interview, he explained that he thought they were going to be documentaries or informational films about Italian history and geography. He was pleasantly surprised to find that he could still learn about history, geography, language, and more, from a fictional movie "that actually played in a movie theatre in Italy" (Alessandro, interview). He came to understand that the use of a non-canonical text, such as a popular film, in a classroom setting can be just as educational as a film intended for education purposes.

COUNTER EXAMPLES

To be sure, as in any situation in which different individuals come together to share one experience, each will experience it somewhat differently. Two participants in particular seemed to have experienced the class differently from the majority. I will talk briefly here about Paolo and Bianca.

Paolo seemed not to take the class as seriously as the other students. Although he fully participated in all the assignments and he offered some very useful insights into the films and our discussions, at times his comments were of the nature of making fun or simply being silly for the sake of being silly. This behavior may well have been a response to the relaxed and free nature of the class. Paolo knew that I had authorized students to say what they pleased. In one such task, the students were asked to post to our online bulletin board two questions that they wished to be addressed at our staged presidential debate in class. All of the other students asked questions that might be asked

at a presidential debate, such as related to tax issues, college tuition, health care, and so on. Paolo's questions were, "*1. Se fosse rapito degli alieni e ti dessi un tatuaggio con uno parole, qualle parole sceglieresti e perche?"* [If you were abducted by aliens and they gave you a tattoo with one word, which word would you choose and why?] "*2. Che cosa metti primo quando mangi i cereali? Il latte o i cereali?"* [What do you pour first when you eat cereal? The milk or the cereal?] From the nature of these questions one can clearly see that he did not take this particular assignment seriously. Although he showed that he knew he had the freedom of self-expression in our class, the question is out of context of the genre of the task itself. Needless to say, his question was not addressed in the debate, but nonetheless he participated in the in-class debate activity. Had I insisted on giving a grade for writing questions that were appropriate to a presidential debate, Paolo likely would have fulfilled that assignment. As such, he did fulfill the assignment, which did not have strict parameters, and he took advantage of that to be playful.

His final self-assessment, written at the end of the semester, shows that his goals in the class were not the same as mine for the class. He wrote,

> If there was something I could change in this class it would be we would have more time to have casual conversations. We could maybe take a trip to a coffee shop or maybe just some casual hangouts. Watching movies is a good way to start things off, but it gets a little old and worn by the end of the semester. We could even have some fun make some homemade icecream or some other non-school related things. When any of us study abroad in Italy, our main goal will be to be able to communicate with other people our age. (third self-assessment)

This comment is interesting for a several reasons. First, watching movies was the only aspect of the class that was dictated by the department administration. All sections of this

particular course were required to have their students watch the films offered by the Italian club, and use them as the basis of class conversation. Beyond that, the individual classes could be designed however the teacher wished. Secondly, Paolo suggested taking a trip outside the classroom, stating that such a change in physical environment would have turned our conversations from school-related topics to more "casual conversations."

Such changes in classroom locale did not result in conversation in the foreign language. A case in point, at the end of the semester, I invited the students to a group dinner at a local Italian-American restaurant to celebrate, which Paolo attended. The conversation was largely in English at that dinner. We still talked about some of the films we had watched throughout the semester, and other Italian films the students had seen or wanted to see, but the conversation was no longer in Italian. It could be that the classroom environment forced the students to speak Italian as much as possible, but once we exited the institutional learning setting, all requirements to speak in the L2 vanished. The topic was not much changed from what we discussed in our class, but the chosen language was. Perhaps it could be said that in a more "natural" setting, especially one occurring in an English speaking context at the end of the semester, a group of speakers of the same L1 will likely speak that L1 together. In the classroom, where the students are given a grade on their participation in Italian, they have an external incentive to speak in Italian.

Bianca, who was a Radio Television and Film major, had distinctly different reasons for taking the conversation class than did other participants. Her in-class participation was always appropriate to the task, and she was a valuable resource given

her more advanced knowledge in film literacy. The other students undoubtedly learned from Bianca a more sophisticated way of speaking about films. However, in her self-assessments, it is clear that her goals for taking the class was essentially to not forget Italian grammar so that she might impress her previous Italian teachers at the university and, more importantly, her ex-boyfriend, who was at the time living in Rome. Additionally, in her self-assessments, she consistently equated learning "all aspects of the language" to memorizing the many verb tenses in Italian. She said in her second self-assessment, "I've tackled *congiuntivo* [subjunctive], now onto *trapassato* [past perfect] or past tense subjunctive. I want to be able to use the full spectrum of the language like I do English and to do so, I'm going to need to buckle down and start figuring out these tenses—not just for a test for a class, but for life." Her socialization of Italian language learning at this point had not moved out of a strong focus on its morphosyntax. What was peculiar about this view is that in the beginning of the semester survey (not included as a primary data source in this study), she indicated that she believed the class should focus on culture 60% of the time and on language 40%. She was one of only two students who believed there should have been a stronger emphasis to learning culture in the class, whereas the other students believed that language learning should account for anywhere from 60% to 85% of the classroom learning activities.

Both Paolo and Bianca, despite their class goals diverging from mine for the class, participated actively and still conducted personal introspection that testified to the multiple literacies that they were indeed developing.

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THEMES

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Gutiérrez compares the Third Space to a kind of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The three criteria that the Third Space shares with the ZPD mentioned in Chapter 2 can be seen in the examples provided from the classroom transcripts. First, we do see a reorganization of everyday concepts into scientific or school-based concepts. The Day 4 activity of writing a trailer to the film allowed the students to transform what was part of their everyday lives—exposure to movie trailers—into an educational activity. Thinking about this text genre and its conventions, with which they were familiar due to the popularity of film and film trailers as a textual genre, showed them that they could bring what they learned in the classroom to the outside world, and what they learned outside into the classroom. It showed them that learning takes place not only within an educational institution, but rather every day, in all parts of their lives. Every interaction with a text can be a learning experience, if read with a critical and mindful approach.

A second criterion is that the students' learning regulate the pace of the activities. With careful attention paid to the students engaged in the task, the forms and levels of mediation required can be monitored. The Day 3 and Day 4 activities were student-led in nature. While the assignments did indeed have boundaries, their manifestation of the assignment, the final product, was fully their own.

For example, for Day 3, the students were required to comment on another student's written comment about the film; for Day 4 the students were required to use information from the film we watched and to reformat it into a new genre. The focus of

these activities was on the process of working through the ideas, not on the final product. This was the critical space that allowed the students to control how they conducted the business of learning. In the Day 3 example, the students failed to follow my instructions of taking turns reading aloud their chosen quote, and instead they immediately launched into an authentic and spontaneous conversation. Their pace was ahead of where I had originally imagined it and planned it. Once they showed me that they were ready to openly discuss the topic, I no longer needed to control the pace of the activity; they had control of the pace and direction of the conversation.

In the Day 4 example, the students had the freedom choose whatever elements of the film and of the genre they felt best represented their abilities to complete the assignment. Furthermore, the class time spent on this assignment was dedicated to the process of creating the text, not on the final product. In fact, the students did not even have time to share the final products with one another, but the assignment was no less meaningful for it.

The third criterion, which is perhaps the most relevant for this study, is that development can be accounted for as the transformation of the individual, of the individual's relation to the environment, and of the environment its self. In the Day 3 and 4 activities, the students were learning that they had the power to transform the learning environment in a way that allowed them to participate at their individual level of competence and interest. They had the authority to authenticate the learning moment—to engage in a way that made the moment meaningful for them. In Day 4, the members of the first group, working on the action film trailer, did not have as strong a command of

the L2 grammar as the second group. However, there was no indication that they were learning less about language or culture from this assignment. Without the pressure of an exacting control of the language's morphosyntactic features, the students then had the power to control the pace of the class, ultimately transforming their classroom environment. In this way, the individual and the environment were mutually informing, revealing that the ecology of language learning plays a key role in the type of learning that takes place and how meaning is appropriated by the students within that environment.

The robust participation in the two activities provided for Day 3 and 4 is a testament to the students' desire for self-expression, even in an academic environment. Throughout the fifteen minutes allowed for the activities, the students were not once off task. In the Day 3 example, the students continued to share their chosen quotes and we discussed them as a whole class for the entire 50 minutes. They were so engaged in the activity that I chose not to interrupt them to have them work on a précis worksheet that I had planned to administer and complete in class that day. The students took the activity in their own hands and transformed it in a way that they could fully participate in and learn from. We saved the précis worksheet for the following class day; they were not at all upset that I had not interrupted their lively discussion of the film and of each students' reactions to it.

During the Day 4 activity, the students were laughing and joking and speaking freely in the L1 and L2, but each utterance and each exchange made was in relation to the given activity. As time ran out at the end of the class and they did not have the chance to

polish and then perform their trailers, two of the groups decided that they would have liked to continue working on the project over the weekend and return to class with a finished product. The horror film group compared their schedules, and they realized they would not be able to meet over the weekend, much to their dismay. Another group, whose conversation was inaudible to the recording device, returned to class the following Monday with a completed written script of their trailer. This was not assigned, nor even suggested by me, the students went above and beyond what I expected them to do for the assignment. They were genuinely interested in the task, and they chose to take the learning opportunity into their own hands.

To further define the Third Space as it was experienced in our conversation class, I choose the salient categories that the students noted in their interviews and self-assessments. That is, language acquisition through self-expression, confidence, and the use of film. Elaboration of how these themes came to define Third Space will follow in Chapter 6, along with further discussion the multiple and intercultural literacies fostered in this atmosphere.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

On reaching the end of the dissertation, I would like to return to the question I began with in Chapter 1: What kinds of theoretical and practical issues are relevant in a holistic language curriculum aiming to promote multiple literacies? It has been my goal to present at once a theoretical and practical view of the how students responded to the implementation of the multiple literacies approach to language learning, with the special purpose of showing how theory and practice need not be mutually exclusive in language course design.

The desire to explore the theory and practice behind the implementation of a multiple literacies language approach led me to the two specific research questions I posed in this study. To answer those questions, I examined the students' experiences and responses to the course studied, and I presented those experiences and responses in light of relevant scholarship in education in general and in foreign language learning in particular.

The remainder of this chapter will be organized in four major sections. First, I will discuss the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 in light of relevant research. Next, I will present limitations to the study. Finally I will provide implications for future research in this area as well as implications for the practice of language teaching and learning.

DISCUSSION

As I discussed in Chapter 2, in recent years there has been a rise in numerous educational discourses and pedagogical approaches for language learning that ultimately aim to promote the learner's development of intercultural competence (Pegrum, 2008; Starkey, 2007; Byrum et al., 2003). Many of these approaches go beyond the communicative approach to language learning by including the critical and social dimensions of language and language use. Among the most well-known of educational discourses that has inspired contemporary scholars toward the social dimension of language learning is sociocultural theory, with its legacy dating back to Vygotsky (1978). Although Vygotsky's work did not focus on language learning, the focus of his work on the co-construction of meaning through collaboration is at the cornerstone of much recent scholarship in language acquisition.

In planning for and teaching the conversation class, I drew from many pedagogical frameworks with the goal of creating a cognitively and textually rich learning environment for the students. In particular, I followed the multiple literacies procedural model offered by Swaffar and Arens (2005), as well as an ecological approach as promoted by van Lier (1996, 2004). I found that by incorporating elements from a variety of approaches that focus on the social and mediated aspects of language learning, the resulting ecology and pedagogy worked together to inspire a sense of intercultural competence and the development of multiple literacies (Swaffar & Arens, 2005)—or what could be called *intercultural literacies* (Pegrum, 2008). To come to these conclusions in my analysis of the data for this study, I have drawn heavily from the

construct of the Third Space (Gutiérrez, 2008), and from the social practice and ecological theories of SLA research (van Lier, 1996, 2004).

MULTIPLE LITERACIES AND THE THIRD SPACE

For the present study, a working definition of Third Space that I use to discuss the data is a space in which the students' interactions and experiences come together to expand their ways of learning a foreign language, and to expand their self-awareness. As mentioned in Chapter 2, unlike Gutiérrez' populations for her work involving the Third Space, the participants in this study were not individuals who were marginalized within society and were seeking empowerment in the classroom. However, the same rubrics of marginalization can be applied; within the mainstream society of standardized language classes, my participants' were afforded a space in which they could create and experience new ways of learning, thereby empowering themselves as creative users of the target language. With the current desideratum for student-centered learning, it is important to understand how such a classroom environment can be created.

In analyzing the data for this study, I found that an understanding of the affordances and constraints of the organization of classroom talk and interaction was the most effective way to define the moments when the Third Space was activated. The data suggests that the Third Space came to life when the learner was in action, co-constructing meaning with others. Therefore, the unit of analysis of this study is the student, or rather, the group of students, in the moment of interaction, including those affordances and

restraints that are present in the environment at the given moment and across time and space.

Similarly, Kern and Schultz (2005) argued for such a context-driven and integrative approach to research on text-based practices in foreign language classes. In the same way, in his proposal that contextual approaches to learning, language, and activity be more supported in SLA research, Thorne (2000a) asserted that "… units of analysis for the study and description of second language learning ought to extend beyond the confines of individual brains to include joint activity, within communities of practice, and mediation, through artifacts" (p. 221).

In this section I discuss three major findings of the relevance of a multiple literacies curriculum with the notion of Third Space: identity formation, repertoires of practice, and tasks that influence interaction and the co-construction of knowledge.

Self-Reflection and Learner Identity

The practice of self-reflection in learning situations in general, and in language learning in particular, is a practice that can lead to and is a result of engaging in social interaction. Second language learning is not merely the acquisition of a new set of grammatical and lexical forms, but rather it is an effort to participate in the lifeworld of another culture—a culture that has been shaped by its own histories. What makes this endeavor such a great effort is that the learner approaches the task with his or her own histories, which are likely quite different from those of the target culture. Thus, self-reflection and issues of identity become relevant. Self-reflection involves identifying

one's goals and reasons for participating in a given social community—be it the community of the native speakers of the target language, or the community of learners of that language—laying strategies for achieving those goals, and reflecting on what was changed or expanded about the self as a result of having participated in that community.

In the present study, I asked the students to engage in formal self-reflections three times throughout the semester. The prompts that I provided for these short reflective pieces provided opportunities for the students to consider their language learning histories in light of their experience in the conversation course, and to consider their experience in the conversation course in light of their language learning histories. In this way, the students' past and present experiences were situated within their own perceptions as language learners and as individual social beings (Norton, 1997).

The students' work in reflecting on the integrated nature of language use, culture, representation of identities, textual formats, and ways of learning helped them to feel more confident and encouraged them in their work of interacting authentically with one another and with the text of the given course unit. Furthermore, they became increasingly introspective about the processes of developing knowledge and awareness of these issues. Each assigned self-assessment showed that throughout the semester, and even beyond the semester's end, as evidenced by the interviews, the students' active reflection on their perceptions of the class and of themselves as part of the class led to an expanded awareness of the dynamic and social self. Over time the students became increasingly articulate in identifying the elements of the learning environment and of their practice that contributed to or inhibited their self-expression and self-exploration.

As van Lier (1996) asserted, the practice of self-reflection can lead to "pedagogical tact" (p. 8). In the case of the students, self-reflection led to their making principled choices in the classroom of what kind of interaction they felt would best represent their processes of meaning-making and would ultimately lead to their development of spoken Italian. Making principled choices about their classroom behavior led to a class of engaged, active learners, who were busy doing the work of comprehending and creating authentic forms of knowledge about Italy and the Italians. The self-reflective process ultimately led to their self-transformations, as they became more acutely aware of their learning practices and their various roles within the community of learners. In short, through the practice of self-reflection the students became conscious of their expanding identities as language learners.

One of the most productive areas of SLA research today regarding the social aspects of language learning looks at the relationship of language use and social identities (see, for example, Norton, 1997; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). In seeking to answer questions of the relationship of identity and language learning, many scholars begin with the assumption that speech, speakers, and social relationships are inseparable. In short, much of the SLA research on identity supports the idea that learner identities are constituted through and by language use. In an ecological view of the textually rich language classroom, with language use changing and shifting across time and space, so too, it is assumed, does the learner's identity. Norton (1997) asserted, "every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they

are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction and negotiation" (p. 410).

In the present study, in their self-assessments, some students did comment about their shifting perceptions of themselves and their learning goals. In fact, many students not only became aware of their identities as language learners and language users, but also of national identities—American and Italian in particular. In my interview of Amalia, she said, "Even though none of us are Italian—or maybe one or two of us was Italian—it felt like we kind of made our own little group of, you know, pre-Italians." This comment, particularly her use of the prefix *pre*, reflected her perception of self shifting in order to incorporate the new Italian-ness she was experiencing through her practice using the language in a community of Italian language users. Duff and Uchida (1997) explained, "…in educational practice as in other facets of social life, identities and beliefs are co-constructed, negotiated, and transformed on an ongoing basis by means of language" (cited in Norton, 1997, p. 421).

The term identity is used across a number of disciplines (anthropology, cultural studies, applied linguistics, and education to name a few) with different theoretical frameworks defining it. Furthermore, identity is often viewed from a specific viewpoint, such as social identity, cultural identity, national identity, and ethnic identity. Norton (1997) offered an explanation of social and cultural identity; though not directly related to the relationship of identity and language learning, I do believe these two viewpoints of identity are useful for the present discussion of Third Space. She defined social identity as "the relationship between the individual and the larger social world, as mediated

through institutions such as families, schools, workplaces, social services, and law courts." Cultural identity refers to "the relationship between individuals and members of a group who share a common history, a common language, and similar ways of understanding the world" (p. 420).

Although these two viewpoints might share as many commonalities as they do differences, they are complimentary definitions of identity that apply well to the data presented in this study. The students' development of social identity in relation to their learning of the Italian language and culture had been mediated by the classroom environments of their present and their past. The institutionalized setting of the classroom and the activities within which they participated shaped the relationship that students could develop between themselves as individuals and the larger Italian and Italian-speaking society. Their development of cultural identity was equally present in the class, as they shared a common language learning history with their classmates, both in our conversation class and in the core language courses. The members of the conversation class also shared common languages (L1 and L2) and similar ways of understanding the world of Italian learning. In this sense, their work in identity formation was highly influenced by their social engagement with the other individuals of the group, with whom they shared common histories and ways of knowing.

Pegrum (2008) stated that "self-exploration and self-discovery" are important for many young adults, whether in the classroom or not. "The least we can do as educators is provide linguacultural input which offers them exposure to a wide variety of (other) ways of being" (p. 145). In other words, whether studying a foreign language or sitting in a

dark theatre watching the latest blockbuster film, young adults naturally engage in the process of exploring the dimensions of the self and seeking identification with others. This is especially true when the individual interacts socially and with a variety of textual modes. As teachers, particularly as language teachers, we should provide students with ample space and resources that can help them navigate their journey of self-discovery and transformation so that they may find their Third Space.

Expanded Repertoires of Practice

Students also became keenly aware of their expanded "repertoires of practice" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 150) as a result of the pedagogical framework of the conversation course. For this study, I define *repertoires of practice* as the students' perception of who they are and what they might be able to accomplish in regards to language learning. In particular, I look at what educational arrangements promoted and supported new capacities for learning (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 150).

In terms of language learning in particular, the students came to the conversation course with a history of a prescriptivist and accuracy-driven curriculum. Entering the conversation course and engaging in the activities and with the texts they found there, over time the students began to expand and reconceive what it could possibly mean to learn a language. In other words, what they counted as language learning and how it was learned began to expand and change over the course of the semester, as we engaged in different types of learning than what they had experienced prior to the conversation class. Thus, their repertoires for what could be learned and how began to broaden. It is

important to note that in no way was my aim to replace students' ways of learning and knowing, rather my goal was to compliment their ways of knowing with some alternatives that might serve them in different communicative environments in the target language.

From the transcripts of the classroom interactions to the students' self-assessments, it is evident that they became conscious of the many different forms a text may take and the many different ways in which we, as a class, approached making sense of text. From reading, writing, speaking, and listening about films, articles, radio segments, film reviews, novel excerpts, and cartoons, the students were able to expand their toolkits of social and textual analysis to include a wider variety of modes of textual input and output. In particular, for many students, this was the first time that feature-length films had become a major text in a learning environment. In addition, the students performed skits, enacted debates, and created commercials, film scenes, and newscasts. Each form of text that they consumed and produced added to and widened their understanding of the ways language is used differently to create new meaning across various textual genres.

Although they did not explicitly learn theories of textual analysis, I did guide the students, especially in the previewing activities, toward different analytical approaches, including critical discourse analysis, semiotic analysis, Marxist analyses of social class, and analyses examining the gender and racial issues presented in the films. This rich variety of analytical approaches in the coursework, as advocated by Swaffar and Arens' (2005) multiple literacies approach, helped to expand their repertoires of practice of

language learning and reading strategies. In their previous language classes, they had focused on only the concrete elements of a story—the *who, what, when*, and *where*, and more importantly on the grammatical structures used in that story. By contrast, in our class, they began to see that a given text can be analyzed at a more complex and subtle level, using a number of analytical lenses, each of which could potentially lead to a different interpretation of the text. In this way, the various discursive methods that we practiced in discussing a film or other text contributed to the students' expanding their repertoires of practice of text analysis.

As students learned new concepts and skills in an environment that was rich with semiotic mediation, and as their identity as language learners began to shift and expand, they began to use with greater confidence and agility a wide range of language, reading, and performative practices. In turn, through each of these activities of listening, reading, writing, and performing, the students began to develop a deeper understanding of the texts' abstract concepts and of their shifting identities. In this way, the classroom practices and the students' learning were mutually informing, leading to a twofold kind of learning. Not only were they learning the content of the film unit, and the skills with which to represent that content (i.e., the form of textual production), but they were also learning about their own learning. This meta-cognitive awareness contributed to the refinement of their repertoires of practice in the classroom as they became more cognizant of how different ways of learning and knowing relate to different ways of representing that knowledge. Thus, they became more deeply aware of what they might be able to accomplish in regards to language learning.

As the definition of Third Space for this study states—"a transformative space where the potential for an expanded form of learning and the development of new knowledge are heightened" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 152)—the Third Space is a space of transformation, of changing perceptions and understandings, of dynamism. Learning to learn in new ways led my students to understand something new about language learning, Italians, and, ultimately, themselves.

Influence of Mediation and Task on Patterns of Interaction

As discussed in Chapter 4, the classroom interactions took on a certain pattern within each film unit of the semester. In each 4-day unit, the interactions began in Day 1 with teacher-led activities and discussions, and they gradually progressed by Day 4 to student-led interactions. In particular, the shift from Day 2 to Day 3 is striking. At Day 2, students did engage voluntarily in more open-ended discussions than in Day 1, however the comments were generally directed through me, not directly to other students in the class, even when responding to another student. Conversely, by Day 3, the students spoke freely *to* one another, both in small groups and in whole-class discussions, without seeking from me confirmation or reformulation of their contributions. What factors fostered this shift in the organization of classroom interactions from Day 2 to Day 3?

Mediated learning

Central to the social constructivist approach to language learning is the notion that human activity is mediated by artifacts and by symbolic sign systems, of which language

is the most important (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985a; Thorne, 2000a, Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). It is a common notion in sociocultural theory as it regards second language acquisition that language learning is in large part a by-product of mediation and socialization into a community of language learning practice (Donato & McCormick, 1994). Mediation, essentially a tool to help complete a task, may come in any form, depending on the specific task. In the case of language learning, the use of language, for both comprehension and production, in a variety of forms and contexts, provides a rich source of mediation for the learners. Two major sources of mediation took place between the Day 2 and Day 3 meetings, the departmental film viewing and the online asynchronous discussion using Blackboard.

Film as mediation. After our Day 2 class, the students went to see the unit film at the Italian club film series screening. After two days of pre-viewing activities, including seeing short clips from the film, the film trailer, related music videos, film reviews, online blogs, and other complementary texts, students finally had the opportunity to see the feature-length film in a setting much like a movie theatre. The pre-viewing materials and activities served to situate the film within Italy's sociohistorical context, the students' personal experiences, and our identities as American users of the Italian language. At the film screening, these pre-viewing materials and discussions at last had the chance to become situated by the feature film itself. The film allowed the discussions of the previous two days to come to life, to be realized through motion images, soundtracks, narrative structures, and situated language use.

Film, an enormously popular and widespread cultural medium, is a language in and of itself. Outside of a classroom setting, the general public who goes to the theatre to see a film is engaging in a learning activity as they view the reality of the film and compare that to their personal histories, resituating themselves in light of the new information gained from the filmic mediation. The viewers engage with the text and attempt to make meaning for themselves from it. The film itself becomes the tool that helps the viewers to understand their world in a new way.

The use of film in the classroom provides an extra layer of mediation, and this is particularly true of foreign film used as a tool for second language acquisition. Film provides an ideal context for exploring and developing the multiple literacies involved in reading it with awareness, such as genre literacy, visual literacy, and film literacy. At the same time, film, especially foreign film, is a useful vehicle for exploring intercultural literacy, as it provides the means through which L2 learners can encounter cultural discourses, which might be similar or different to the learners' own cultural discourses (Pegrum, 2008).

Through the stories of the films, the students in our class were exposed to a new version of the world as each film (and its creators) saw it. Film provides a lens through which students may begin to *experience* other cultures, rather than merely learn facts about them. These discourses as lived through the characters and environments in the film inspired the students to feel, see, and experience the world as the characters did in the picture. The students anchored their interpretations of the film on the previewing activities and discussions, and then they anchored their post-viewing discussions on the

film. The film as the focal point of the 4-day discussion unit was the most important mediating tool for the students' practice in that unit. Once they viewed the film, the students had ample textual resources on which to draw to anchor their classroom interactions.

Asynchronous written discussion as mediation. In addition to the film itself, the students had another mediating source to help them in constructing meaning of the film before our Day 3 meeting, the online asynchronous discussions. These online discussions served as mediation at both the comprehension and production level of language use. On the production side, the students were required to post at least two comments, in Italian, to their assigned small group on Blackboard. One comment had to be an original comment or question about the film, and the other comment had to be a response to another group-member's post. In this way, the assignment required interaction and collaboration in language use and meaning making.

On the comprehension side, the Blackboard discussions provided mediation of both the use of the Italian language and also of the students' individual and collective understandings of the film. Having to post their comments after the film screening, but before our next class session, forced the students to use the film and the online discussion venue as a space to begin co-constructing significance at their individual levels of linguistic and discursive awareness. In other words, without me as the authority figure overseeing their conversations, the students could truly direct and *create* their own knowledge base about the text, which would then become the basis for our next in-class conversation.

Communication in any modality is a co-constructed social process, whether between peers or between a novice and expert. Thus, as Thorne (2000a) stated, "linguistic interaction is constructive of a 'temporarily shared social reality', and, in reciprocity, such intersubjectivity scaffolds the process of intention-attribution and communicative practice" (p. 232). In other words, mediated approaches to second language learning involve the creation of meaningful social realities through interaction with language. Once the students experienced two such robust forms of mediated language use and comprehension, their social reality as a community of language users was strengthened. The social reality of the community of co-constructors of meaning carried over into the second half of the film unit, in which the class discussions would be driven by the meaning they had created together.

Mediation is one of three core tenets of sociocultural theory; the other two are internalization and the Zone of Proximal Development. Internalization and mediation work together with the individual who co-constructs meaning through social interactions. Lantolf and Thorne (2007) explained, "Internalization is a negotiated process that reorganizes the relationship of the individual to her or his social environment and generally carries it into future performance" (p. 203). As such, it is evident from the data in this study that the mediating artifacts of the film and the online discussions helped the students internalize the meaning that we had been creating together in our previewing activities and in the film. Each student then came back to the class for the post-viewing days having internalized, at least to a degree, the language and content that had been guiding our discussions for the two days prior. They were then cognitively and

emotionally ready to engage one another directly rather than seeking such help from me in the interactions. The rich semiotic mediation helped them to realize and achieve greater potential language use, thereby expanding their repertoires of practice, as mentioned above, as well as expanding their identities as language learners.

Effects of task on co-construction of knowledge. The nature of the sequenced activities from Day 1 to Day 4 is another potential way to answer the question of why the classroom interactions shifted so drastically between Days 2 and 3. As the excerpts provided in Chapter 4 show, although the most dramatic change in classroom interaction did indeed occur between these two days, a gradual shift in the organization of talk and interaction was seen throughout the 4-day unit. As discussed in Chapter 5, with each new day in a film unit, our discussions would look back to previous comments and activities from the unit. Sequencing the activities in this way situated the students' comments within our co-constructed knowledge base. By returning to their comments, we validated and authenticated their contributions, giving students the confidence they needed to use that created knowledge to begin to challenge and engage one another directly.

At the beginning of each film unit, we would begin anew with the process of creating our shared knowledge base, and the students relied more heavily on me to help guide them through the new content. As such, I was required, by the level of mediation that they needed, to provide more information about the film's sociohistorical context. Once vaguely familiar to the students, they gradually began to use the new knowledge to direct their interactions with one another. By the end of the unit, they no longer needed

me to deliver information or to justify their comments; they knew that they had the freedom and the authority to engage one another's ideas directly.

Interestingly, this was not a gradual shift from the beginning of the semester to the end, but a pattern that repeated itself again with each Day 1. More discussion about this particular trend would be interesting, and I will suggest below an area of future research along these lines. However, deep analysis of this phenomenon is outside the scope of this dissertation.

The various themes presented in this dissertation all contributed across time to the slow and gradual creation of a Third Space in the classroom. On a global level, our classroom became a counter-culture, a Third Space, to the students' prior learning experiences. On a more local level, the Third Space—the transformative space where new ways of knowing and learning came to life—was experienced toward the end of each film unit. In sum, the realization of this particular pattern of learning and interacting, along with the multiple awarenesses that the students developed, came to define the Third Space for our conversation class.

LIMITATIONS

This project took an exploratory approach to identifying the major themes that arose from the implementation of a multiple literacies pedagogy in a university level foreign language conversation course. For example, I did not set out to identify how students define and occupy a Third Space. Rather, the patterns of interactions and themes of students' perceptions led me to this theoretical construct. Due to the grounded nature

of this study, there are many variables that affected the overall experience of the course, and therefore the results that came from it. Given a different context with different variables, the interpretations would certainly vary from those I have offered. Some of these variables include certain elements of the execution of the study itself, elements of the organization of the conversation class, my own positionality within the research site, and student and teacher training. I will now describe each briefly.

Study Design

Due to the changing nature of this course as it is offered each semester, I did not conduct an official pilot study for this dissertation. I had taught the conversation course many times before, and many activities advocated by the multiple literacies pedagogy I had already incorporated into my repertoire of teaching practices. Because the films chosen for the course change each semester, I could not have conducted a complete pilot study for this research in which the materials and activities were tested. However, a pilot study would have helped solve some issues of audio recording small group work, of documenting the online Blackboard discussions, and of knowing better how to organize the data during the collection process.

Another limitation to this study is that there was no control group with which to compare the themes that came from our class. It could have been revealing to see if also in other concurrent sections of the conversation course—which would not have espoused a multiple literacies pedagogical approach—the students would have experienced a transformative way of language learning along the notions of self-expression, confidence,

and the use of film in the class. Again, as an exploratory study, a control group was not appropriate. However, it could provide valuable insight in future research into the utility of such an approach to language teaching. It could also help to reveal the influence of individual student differences in learning histories, motivations, and aptitudes.

Not all of the data collected during this study were used in the analysis of the results. Namely, the Blackboard discussions proved to be too copious and not in fitting with the three themes presented in the discussion. Educational research on computer-mediated communication (CMC) is rich and plentiful, and it certainly would have offered valuable insight into what and how the students were learning. However, inclusion of such data proved to be outside the scope of the present study.

Institutional Limitations

Some limitations related to the class itself should be reiterated in light of the study limitations. First, the course is offered with few class meetings in relation to the core language courses. We met only twice a week for 50 minutes each class. These scant 100 minutes per week of class time in which 10 students could practice speaking Italian still did not amount to much practice time regarding their conversational proficiency. Yet, for the purpose of this study it provided plenty of hours of classroom talk for analysis.

Secondly, the materials selection for the class was also a limitation. The films chosen for this class are chosen by departmental faculty, and, because the film screenings are open to the general public, the film selections change from semester to semester. From a research perspective, this practice made it challenging to prepare appropriate

supplementary materials and to anticipate students' reactions to the films. In some cases, I had to prepare activities and materials as the semester went along, as the film selections were announced only two weeks before the semester began. Had this been a class in which the same films were shown only to the class (and not open to the public) every semester, more time could have been devoted to the selection of supplementary materials and preparation of corresponding activities.

The study was further limited by the institutional system of the Italian department at this university. Had there been greater freedom for exploring different curricula also in other courses, the results might have revealed a different conclusion. Given that the only course available for the individual teachers to experiment with different curricular approaches is the conversation course, the nature of that course is always quite different from the core language courses. The novelty of the learning approach could have been cause for the students' positive experience of the class.

Finally, as this study is limited to third-semester undergraduate Italian students at the University of Texas, any conclusions apply primarily to this population and may only be suggestive for other groups. However, it is my hope that the findings have provided some indices for future research.

Caveats

First, my subject position as a teacher-researcher lent certain biases to the interpretation of the results of this study. As a seasoned teacher in this department with my own philosophies and beliefs about teaching and learning, I have found myself at

times at odds with various aspects of the curriculum of the core language courses, which was my original motivation for conducting the study. My evaluations and critiques, therefore, of the core language courses are certainly presented through the lens of my personal philosophies of education in general and of language learning in particular. Similarly, the conversation class was designed with very specific learning outcomes in mind, which do not necessarily harmonize with those of the rest of the departmental curriculum, but rather with my personal beliefs about what a learning experience could (and should) be.

In addition to my philosophies of teaching and learning being at the forefront of the course design, my personality also surely had an effect on the kinds of classroom interactions I witnessed. Another teacher with different philosophies and approaches to teaching and to student interactions would have elicited different responses from the students. I tend to have a non-prescriptivist approach in the classroom, whereas other teachers may prefer a more structured and predictable format. In a course that values interactions so highly, the teacher's personality certainly can affect the ways in which students interact with her, and with one another.

My role as a teacher researcher quite possibly had an effect on the data I collected. Although I did not ask the students to participate in the study until after the semester concluded, I did mention on the first day of class that I may or may not eventually use information from the class for a dissertation study. The audio recorder was placed prominently in the center of our circle at every class period, undoubtedly reminding the students that their words and interactions could potentially become data for

me at a later date. Although they grew accustomed to the recorder—so much so that they forgot it was there at times—they still had prior knowledge that their interactions and their words were being carefully observed. All of these factors of my positionality could have affected the type of data I was able to collect.

Training may well have been another limitation to the study. To study the theoretical and practical implications of the implementation of a multiple literacies curriculum, training in what such a curriculum entails would have been beneficial. I did, however, study it theoretically, and in doing so I discovered that my general teaching practices included many features of such a curricular design. Janet Swaffar did visit the class as an observer on two occasions, and together we discussed what took place in the course and how I might move forward to continue work in developing students' multiple literacies. In this way, a brief in situ teacher training did occur.

Moreover, the students also lacked prior training in the more subtle interpretive tasks involved in a pedagogy of developing multiple literacies. Together we had to put into practice in meaningful ways the sequenced activities, starting from broad identifications of concrete information to the more nuanced synthesis of creating one's own text based on an authentic model studied in class. This proved challenging at times. In many cases the film under analysis at the time had a great effect on how we as a class approached it through learning activities. With each semester that passes that I am able to teach using this pedagogical approach, I hope to learn more and more what kinds of activities are more useful and meaningful for students and me alike. In the case of this study, however, we were all trying it out for the first time together.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOLARSHIP

Language Use of the Third Space

One of the most important research projects that could come out of the present study is the analysis of the language (both L1 and L2) that is used by FL students and teachers alike in the Third Space. Gutiérrez (2008) provided preliminary results of such an analysis, though her focus was not on students in a foreign language class. In addition to examining the use of code-switching in the classroom and student development of grammatical and lexical proficiency, it could be particularly useful to look at the moments of robust learning in the Third Space and examine the frequency of particular types of language use, such as questions, modal verbs, directives, and metaphors. This would help illuminate the role that the target language plays in different learning practices and how each affects the other.

Another area of language study that could prove useful for SLA scholarship is the students' development in the use of discourse markers in their conversational speech. Discourse markers, such as *however, although, then,* and *so* help to situate utterances within the larger discursive context. This is a feature of language use that is rarely, if ever, taught explicitly in language courses (for an exception, see Kramsch & Crocker, 1985), yet it is an essential part of meaningful human communication and of critical thinking and analytical ability. It would be fruitful for the study of pragmatic competence in the target language to examine the students' use of discourse markers and if and how that frequency changes over time and across communicative contexts.

Multimodal Learning

Future research should also address a limitation to the present study, which is the use of the new media formats of mediated communication. In the present study, the use of asynchronous online discussions was an essential part of how the students interacted with one another and how their learning was mediated, yet these potential data were not included in the present analysis. Content and discourse analysis of such texts could reveal how moments of robust interaction were lived in written discussions.

Furthermore, a corpus study of the texts that students produce in various forms of digital media—asynchronous and synchronous chats, blogs, emails, and wikis—could be studied to examine linguistic development over time, potentially revealing the imbrication of morphosyntactic development and the genre of use. The careful study of computer mediated communication (CMC) was beyond the scope of this dissertation. Much scholarship exists in this area of education, however, to my knowledge it has not been studied within the construct of Third Space.

Teacher Training

An interesting perspective in educational research could be the study of the effects of teacher training when implementing new pedagogical techniques. In the present study, as a teacher researcher, I fully understood why I was making the pedagogical choices I made. On a larger curricular scale, were such pedagogical techniques to be implemented across all sections of the same course, or even across different courses, each teacher

would be better equipped to implement the techniques if he or she knew why they were useful and what was the pedagogical intention of the given technique. Teachers and students alike should always be aware of the big picture of the curricular design within which they are interacting. This is what leads to the "principled choices" that van Lier (1996) discussed. The Third Space and a multiple literacies pedagogical approach should be taught in teacher training programs, and it would be useful to study how teachers in those training programs come to make meaning for themselves of these pedagogical approaches, and how they choose the implement them in the classroom.

Another line of inquiry that would compliment the present study is the study of the ethic of care in classroom environments. Goldstein (1999) has explored the affective and volitional aspects of sociocultural learning theory, and she has noted the dearth of research further exploring the implications of affective factors in a socio-constructivist pedagogy. The construct of the ethic of care, where the teacher makes the students' problems or questions her own, receives them intellectually, and immerses herself in them has similar dimensions of the Third Space in the sense of recognizing alternative practices for learning and expanding the students' awareness of the learning process. Studies examining the ethic of care taught in teacher training programs that also highlight the promotion of the Third Space as a general educational goal would further close the gap between the affective and cognitive dimensions in a socio-constructivist learning environment.

Classroom Discourse

As mentioned above, the phenomenon of the pattern of interaction that took place over the 4-day units in the present study provides some insight into an interesting area of future research. The empirical study of classroom research has been an important part of education research for decades, from describing the processes and desired products of classroom talk (Dunkin & Biddle, 1979; Flanders, 1970), to analyses of lesson structures (Mehan, 1985; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) and participation structures (Erickson, 1982) to teacher-talk register (Barnes, 1976; Labov, 1972), to cultural differences and differential treatment in the classroom (Heath, 1983). Many of these studies imply a certain amount of teacher control over the nature of the interactions in the classroom. It is commonly understood that a slow acculturation into a classroom discourse structure will ultimately determine the quantity and quality of student and teacher talk in the classroom. However, in the case of this study, there is evidence to believe that the nature of the task coupled with the students' levels of cognition about the topic can greatly influence the nature of the classroom discourse. Since they deferred to me more readily in Day 1 than any other day of the unit, it is possible that the students' lack of prior knowledge was a contributing factor in the nature of the more teacher-driven interactions. Empirical work in this area of classroom discourse is lacking, and could be fruitful for both theoretical and practical discussions of classroom language use.

Curricular Innovation

Finally, an area of research that is greatly needed in current era of change is the examination of long term outcomes of innovation in language teaching at the departmental or overall curricular level, not just the classroom level. For example, the German language department at Georgetown University offers a holistic and innovative approach to German as a foreign language that highlights the development of cultural, historical, and genre literacy at all levels of language learning. The systematic empirical study of the learner outcomes and beliefs in such a learning environment is most needed today, considering the recent calls for a more integrated and holistic curriculum in the foreign languages (Modern Language Association, 2007).

From this dissertation study there are indications that a more integrated approach to language learning can be fruitful for the students in various ways. From a one-credit course, the chances that these new ways of learning will become fully integrated for these students is unlikely, and so it cannot be studied at the present research site. However, in a program that fosters the articulation and integration of content, meaning-making, and self-reflection, which is missing in many foreign language departments, the study of the long term outcomes for both students and teachers are necessary to better understand the best practices.

Along curricular lines, assessment is one of the most important aspects of any sound educational program. The assessment goals and procedures of any course should be in line with the same philosophies guiding the educational policy itself. With an educational discourse of socio-constructivism, ecological education, or multiple

literacies, to name only a few, assessments of foreign language acquisition cannot continue to focus solely on discrete point grammatical structures, conversation management, or pronunciation, for example. To be sure, these elements are important in any language education program, however, in a pedagogy aiming toward intercultural competence and literacies, such constituents do not suffice to answer the call of the educational policy behind it. Rather, the students must be assessed also on their development of literacies and intercultural communicative understanding. More empirical work is required to determine appropriate and contextualized assessment methods for a curriculum striving for intercultural competence and multiple literacies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The Curriculum

Much as curricular innovation is an implication for future research, it is so too for future classroom and departmental practices. One of the practical shortcomings of the site of the present study is that its focus is on an ancillary one-credit conversation course that is not required for any degree at the university. As such, the course is often approached, by both teachers and students, as a "fun" course, one that is separate from the rest of the Italian curriculum at the university and not to be taken too seriously.

However, as the findings suggest, incorporating opportunities for authentic and extended discourse around meaningful texts and topics, anchored in sequential activities that build upon the students' knowledge and interactions led to very real learning outcomes for the students, which they felt were missing from their other Italian courses at

the university. While I certainly do not suggest that this approach be implemented in its every detail in every course offered by a department, I do believe that incorporating some of the fundamental elements studied here into every level of a language curriculum could lead to similar learning outcomes for the students as those found here, leaving the students with a more integrated view of the language, the culture, and their own ways of learning.

First and foremost, opportunities for self-reflection should be incorporated at every level of language learning. In this study, through self-assessments students were asked to verbalize what was important to them and to examine their own processes of learning and participation in a systematic way. Self-assessments that are assigned several times throughout the term require students to revisit their past performances and perceptions on language learning and to make meaning of that in regards to where they would like to go in the future. Self-reflection, for both students and teachers, can lead us to become more thoughtful and principled in our participation of the communities in the classroom and beyond.

Secondly, sufficient opportunities for repetition and revisiting texts would help reveal to students the many layers of meaning that any given text has. Beginning with the identification of the concrete elements of a text, the *who, what, when,* and *where*, and then increasing to ever-more complex tasks, students take responsibility for their learning, and they experience how the identification of certain elements over others can lead to different interpretations. The semiotics of a given text are more easily accessed and examined when the task of analyzing them is broken down into manageable

activities. In this way, students learn to build on their own interpretations, to substantiate their interpretations based on the information available in the text itself, and to trust themselves as meaning-makers, empowering themselves as learners. Furthermore, the opportunity to repeat certain language use and patterns helps them to practice the use of the L2 across time and learning contexts.

If these kinds of activities are incorporated from the beginning level to advanced levels of language learning, students may better understand the connection of language choice and its associated potential meanings. Such work requires close examination across all levels of the curriculum of the language itself—its syntax and lexicon and choice of register, for example—as well as an examination of the context and genre in which it was produced. Many language departments today lack articulation between the goals and expectations between the lower- and upper-division courses, with the lower-division focusing on morphosyntax and talk about the self and the upper-division focusing on literary analysis of the canon literature, (Kern 2002). This gap could be drastically lessened, leaving students and teachers both with a sense of accomplishment and greater vision for the big picture of language use and language learning. Not only can this offer a deeper understanding of how the forms of language relate to their function, but also of the many generic conventions of texts in any given language and the cultural and historical representations that the text produces, (Swaffar & Arens, 2005). This has far-reaching implications both within and outside of the academic setting.

Teaching and learning theory. To successfully learn tools of textual analysis, in both the first and target language, students need to become practiced at applying different

theoretical lenses to the text. Teaching analytical theory in the foreign language curriculum could provide a strong foundation of developing intercultural literacies by increasing students' critical analytical skills. As Swaffar and Arens (2005) point out, "using theory and teaching others to use it call for different pedagogical strategies" (p. 79).

To teach analytical theories in the FL class, particularly at the beginning stages of language learning, students need to learn strategies for global processing of the text, rather than producing interpretations based on the teacher's model interpretation. In many FL classes today, the teacher, him or herself adept at applying analytical theories to complicated texts, tend to teach their analysis, as opposed to teaching the students how to analyze. In other words, students should learn reading strategies. Note that "reading" here refers to print texts as well as audio and video texts.

The students do not necessarily need to learn the names of specific analytical frameworks, such as Marxism, queer theory, postmodernist, feminist, etc. Rather, the students could benefit from the systematic practice of applying different lenses in order to identify meaning patterns within a text. Pre-reading activities (as in the Day 1 and Day 2 activities presented in Chapter 4) are essential to activate the students' prior knowledge about the topic. Such background knowledge and personal experiences about the topic should then compliment the theoretical analysis of the text, only after careful examination of what meaning patterns are in the text itself.

Regardless of the specific lens, the practice of reading critically and analytically can help students beyond the foreign language classroom, and beyond the academy, to

consider a variety of perspectives during the meaning-making process. The learners would be better equipped to base their perceptions of the other's culture on careful observation and thoughtful interpretation. Practicing theoretically driven analysis can help lead to critical analytical thought in general, thereby reducing the chances of stereotyping. One of the main goals of intercultural literacy, after all, is to be more proficient in reading another culture from a new perspective, with a thoughtful and open mind.

Authenticity in the foreign language classroom. Another implication for practice has to do with the notion of authenticity. This does not refer simply to the use of authentic texts in the classroom (texts that are produced by and for native speakers of the target language). I am referring to authenticity on a more philosophical and situated perspective.

First, the present study indicates that an authentic awareness about language and language use and about learning can lead to more confident and courageous practice for the students. If the students are asked to be true to themselves in their use of language and in their understanding of themselves as learners, students begin to develop an authentic identity as a language learner, and they begin to shift their goal away from becoming a native speaker of the L2, which by definition cannot happen. Rather, they aim to accomplish what they truly believe they can accomplish given the restrictions of the given environment. This authentic vision of themselves as language learners—gained through self-reflection and interaction with peers—also helps the students to develop

awareness about success and failure in language learning and what really constitutes successes and failures.

This kind of authentic awareness of themselves as learners and of the demands of the learning situation leads to an authentication of participation in the classroom. Students begin to learn that they have the authority and the autonomy to engage in extended discourse with their peers. With this, they develop a level of confidence about their abilities to communicate that is not afforded in a system that focuses strictly on structural and lexical accuracy. Students need to be given some opportunities to play with the language, to speak freely, and to express themselves without penalty so that they may authenticate their participation in the language learning environment. This can be accomplished even in classes that focus on grammar structures. At times the teacher can demand accuracy and precision, but it should be complimented by the freedom to play with the language. As Claudio suggested earlier, the opportunity and authority to play with the language reveals to the students what they *do* know, not what knowledge they lack.

Through self-reflection and self-expression, students begin to develop their own voice and identity in the target language. They begin to connect themselves to the language in a way that is meaningful for them. They develop an authentic sense of self, a self which is constantly in flux as their translingual and transcultural competences increase and move. In this way, language use itself becomes authenticated, a movement away from language as a static object to be studied.

Multimodal learning. From a very practical perspective, the use of a variety of modalities in both input and output in the language classroom should be considered at all levels of language learning. The findings of this study suggest that students did became aware of the different ways of learning that were highlighted by different forms of text. Written, spoken, visual, audio, etc. all provided information in different ways, triggering different learning faculties for the students.

The communicative actions inspired by the various modalities of text each require different participant structures and roles—listener, reader, writer, speaker, watcher, performer, etc. By exposing students to the language and asking them to create language across different modalities, students gain a deeper and more multi-faceted understanding of how language is used differently across a variety of texts. They also have greater opportunities for learning the language across meaningful communicative relationships with their peers and with the texts they are studying. This situated learning helps the students realize that language is living and dynamic, and it changes across time, space, and communicative need, an awareness that they can certainly take with them beyond the classroom.

By pushing the boundaries of "the world as it is and the world as it could be, we see that institutions of learning can be transformed" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 160). In other words, as students and teachers alike, we do not need to always fall into the patterns of those who came before us, forever perpetuating the *status quo* of educational discourse. In this era of change it is time to embrace the recent call for change in the classroom and in the language education curriculum. With more holistic and ecological approaches to

learning, which take the learner's interests and strengths as the guiding direction of the manifestation of the curriculum, we can accomplish that goal. We can achieve the Third Space as individuals and as collective learners.

The study described in this dissertation is significant to the field of FLE precisely because many scholars have called for the kind of curriculum that could provide a learning environment where students may begin to develop their multiple literacies, yet very little research exists that assesses how students develop pragmatic competence, analytical skill, and verbal proficiency. Precisely because few studies have attempted to document the implementation of a pedagogy focusing on multiple cultural literacies and the students' cognitive and affective responses to such a curriculum, my investigation provides a basis to explore these issues further. The implications for future research are many, as discussed above. It is my hope that this dissertation provides enough insight into the details of an innovative pedagogy to inform scholars and teachers from any discipline, but particularly those in FLE, who want to explore both the theoretical and practical implications of such curricular innovation.

Appendix A: Sample Précis Exercise from Day 1 Activity

ITL 118K Nome _____

1) TEMA CENTRALE: Comparazioni/contrasti di un romanzo e l'adattamento in un film

2) LA LOGICA: Nel paragonare e confrontare una scena di un film italiano al romanzo da cui è stato adattato, vediamo le loro strutture di comunicazione.

3)

Brani del libro omessi dal film	**Come il film sostituisce quel brano**
p. 77-8 "—Devo andare a pisciare. Era stata deliberatamente sgradevole, volgare. Voleva fargli sentire tutto il peso del suo disprezzo. Ma passandogli davanti aveva sentito l'odore di eccitazione. Lui l'aveva presa per un braccio. --Lascia la porta aperta. --Cos'è, ti piacciono le schifezze?"	28:39 Il loro dialogo è quasi uguale, ma la descrizione del narratore viene rappresentata dalla musica intrigante; il tono seduttivo e cattivo della voce di Patrizia; il modo in cui lei si avvicina a Scialoja.
p. 78 "Lei si era fatta vicina. Purché si sbrigasse. Era stanca. Gli arabi del Hilton l'avevano sfinita. Gli aveva sciolto il nodo della cravata. Il suo odore era discreto, tabacco e colonia amara. L'odore del maschio alla prima esperienza morbosa. Lui l'aveva allontanata con una specie di ghigno."	

4) IMPLICAZIONI: In che modo sono simili o/e diversi i modi in cui sia un romanzo sia un film comunicano l'atmosfera, il tono, i pensieri, le emozioni, ecc. Scrivete 2 o 3 frasi.

Appendix B: Translation of Sample Précis Exercise from Day 1 Activity

ITL Name _____

1) MAIN THEME: Comparison/contrasts of a novel and its film adaptation

2) LOGIC: By comparing and contrasting a scene from an Italian film to the novel from which the film was adapted, we can see their respective structures of communication.
3)

Scenes from the book omitted from the film	**How the film substitutes that scene**
p. 77-8 "—I have to piss. She was deliberately unpleasant, vulgar. She wanted to make him feel all the weight of her disgust. But walking in front of him she smelled the odor of excitement. He took her arm. --Leave the door open. --What, do you like it dirty?"	28:39 Their dialogue is almost identical, but the narrator's description is represented through intriguing music, the seductive tone of Patrizia's voice, and the way in which she moves closer to Scialoja.
p. 78 "She had come closer. So as to hurry the situation along. She was tired. The Arabs at the Hilton had done her in. She untied the knot of his tie. His odor was discrete, tobacco and bitter cologne. The odor of a man in his first unwholesome experience. He pushed her away with a sort of sneer."	

4) IMPLICATIONS: How are the ways in which a novel and a film communicate atmosphere, tone, thoughts, emotions, etc. different or similar to each other? Write 2 or 3 phrases.

Appendix C: Sample Précis Exercise from Day 2 Activity

ITL 118K Nome _____

1) TEMA CENTRALE: recensione di *Notte prima degli esami*

2) LOGICA: Nell'identificare le ragioni per cui il film è piaciuto o non è piaciuto al recensore, impariamo il linguaggio per descrivere positivamente o negativamente un film.

3)

Punto positivo o negativo	Ragione

4) PER CONTINUARE: Dopo aver visto il film, scrivete la vostra recensione sul wiki. Discutete la recitazione, la storia, la musica, e la fine. Discutete anche quanto è vicine alla vostra esperienza alle superiori americane.

Appendix D: Translation of Sample Précis Exercise from Day 2 Activity

ITL Name _____

3) CENTRAL THEME: review of the film *Notte prima degli esami*

4) LOGIC: In identifying the reasons why the reviewer liked or disliked the film, we can learn the language used to describe a film positively or negatively. 3)

Positive or negative point	Reason

4) TO CONTINUE: After having seen the film, write your own reviews on the class wiki. Discuss the acting, the plot, the music, and the ending. Also discuss how similar the film's story is to your experience in American high schools.

Appendix E: Sample Précis Exercise from Day 4 Activity

ITL 118K Nome_____

Fame chimica

Alla colonna a sinistra scrivete esempi dal film (sia il contenuto sia la cinematografia) che sono riconoscibili alle culture internazionali. Alla colonna a destra scrivete gli aspetti che sono unicamente italiani.

Aspetti globali/internazionali	**Aspetti italiani**

DOMANDE: Per chi è stato fatto il film *Fame chimica*? Chi è il pubblico inteso?

Appendix F: Translation of Sample Précis Exercise from Day 4 Activity

ITL Name_____

Fame chimica

In the left-hand column, write examples from the film (both the content and the cinematography) that are relevant internationally. In the right-hand column, write some aspects that are uniquely Italian.

Global/International Aspects	Italian Aspects

QUESTIONS: For whom was the film *Fame chimica* made? Who is the intended audience?

Appendix G: Course Syllabus

Italian 118K
Spring 2008 Syllabus

Instructor:	Brandi DeMont
Email:	brandidemont@gmail.com
Office:	HRH 4.158
Office hours:	Tuesday 11-12; Thursday 4:30-5:30; and by appointment
Class time:	Monday, Wednesday 11:00-12:00
Classroom:	BEN 1.106 (subject to change)

Course description
Italian 118K, Practice in Spoken Italian, is a course designed to help you 1) gain confidence and agility in written and spoken conversational Italian and 2) expand your critical awareness and understanding of Italian cultures. The ability to engage in written and spoken conversation requires also the ability to recognize, interpret, and engage in many different types and forms of language use. Therefore, in this class we will "read" a number of different Italian texts, and we will use these texts as the basis for language production, both written and spoken. By "read" I mean that we will analyze, interpret, discuss, and perform different pieces of Italian writing, art, music, film, TV, and other Italian texts. There is a strong focus on Italian cinema in this class, but other texts will be examined as well.

By the end of this semester you should be able to:
- Engage in spoken or written discussion in Italian with greater confidence
- Express your own interpretations of a variety of Italian texts
- Identify the communicative structures of the texts
- Discuss the structures and the various interpretations of the text in both written and spoken Italian
- Use the language of the text to create your own

Course requirements

Required text
There is no textbook for this class. You will be required to attend viewings of Italian films that are shown by the *Circolo italiano*. There will be six (6) films this semester. If you are unable to attend any viewing (schedule forthcoming) you may view the films at the FAC; all films will be on reserve. You may also be able to rent these films from local video stores or from Netflix. In addition to the movies, I will provide you with a number of readings, clips, songs, etc. You will have to read these for homework and we will discuss them in class.
We will use Blackboard heavily this semester. You should get in the habit now of checking it once daily for new announcements. I will be adding websites and documents to the site regularly, and I will post an announcement on Blackboard each time I do so. We will also use Blackboard for group discussions for each film.

Film viewings
As stated above, it is mandatory to view the films that are shown by the *Circolo italiano*. There are six (6) films this semester, which will always be held on a Thursday night at 8:00 PM. A definitive schedule will be distributed once available.
There will be assignments due the first day of class after each film, which will be impossible to complete if you have not seen the film. Any of these assignments that are missed will result in a deduction of 2 percentage points each from the final grade.

Grading policy

20% Class participation
10% Attendance
15% Précis
20% Blackboard
25% Presentations
10% Class/self assessment

20% Class participation
Your active and honest participation in this class is of utmost importance for you to gain from the course the above objectives. As the title of the course indicates, this is a chance for you to practice conversing in Italian. You will have ample opportunity to do so; you simply have to seize it. Attached is an explanation of how this grade will be calculated.

10% Attendance
Your attendance in the class is mandatory for you to progress and improve your conversation skills. You may have three absences. Any more than three (3), excused or not, will result in a zero (0) in this component.

15% Précis exercises
To help guide our analysis and interpretation of the various texts, there will be a matrix-based exercise that you will complete for various readings/viewings. These will not be graded for grammatical accuracy, but rather for your effort and ability to complete the task based on information from the text itself. More information about how to complete a précis and how they will be graded will be provided as the assignments are distributed. Some will be completed in class and others will be assigned as homework.

20% Blackboard discussion groups
After each film viewing you will be required to post two comments/questions to your online discussion group in Blackboard (groups to be assigned). Your postings should be at least paragraph length (at least 5 phrases) and should be based on the film and any discussions we have had in class. The postings must be completed by midnight of the Sunday immediately after each film viewing.

25% Presentations
As this class is designed to help you improve your conversational Italian, great importance will be placed on your speaking practice. There will be research-based and theatrical presentations for each film. A grading rubric for each will be provided as the assignments are distributed.

10% Class and self assessments
Three times throughout the semester (beginning, middle, and end) you will be required to write an assessment of yourself, your participation, your experience in the class. I will provide you with a prompt for issues for you to think about in your assessment. It should be about one page in length, written in English, typed, double-spaced, in 12-point font.

Tentative semester schedule (subject to change)
Dates in bold indicate a film screening (Thursday, 8PM)

14, 16 Jan	Introduction to course Introduction of filmic terms in Italian
21, 23 Jan	21 Jan MLK Holiday Research summaries due Semester goals due
24 Jan	*Romanzo criminale*
28, 30 Jan	Postviewing activities Blackboard entries due (27 Jan midnight)
4, 6 Feb	Previewing activities
7 Feb	*Notte prima degli esami*
11, 13 Feb	Postviewing activities Blackboard entries due (10 Feb midnight)
18, 20 Feb	Presidential debates
25, 27 Feb	Previewing activities
28 Feb	*La battaglia di Algeri*
3, 5 Mar	Postviewing activities Blackboard entries due (2 Mar midnight) Mid-term assessments due
10, 12 Mar	Spring Break
17, 19 Mar	Previewing activities
20 Mar	*Saturno contro*
24, 26 Mar	Postviewing activities Blackboard entries due (23 Mar midnight)

31 Mar, 2 Apr	Previewing activities
3 Apr	*Fame chimica*
7, 9 Apr	Postviewing activities Blackboard entries due (6 Apr midnight)
14, 16 Apr	Previewing activities
17 Apr	*Ovosodo*
21, 23 Apr	Postviewing activities Blackboard entries due (20 Apr midnight)
28, 30 Apr	Final assessments due Final presentations

Film Schedule (subject to change)
All films shown in MEZ B0.302 (Basement auditorium) Thursday, 8:00 PM

24 Jan	*Romanzo criminale* (2005, Michele Placido)
7 Feb	*Notte prima degli esami* (2006, Fausto Brizzi)
28 Feb	*Battaglia di Algeri* (1966, Gillo Pontecorvo)
20 Mar	*Saturno Contro* (2007, Ferzan Ozpetek)
3 Apr	*Fame chimica* (Antonio Bocola & Paolo Vari, 2004)
17 Apr	*Ovosodo* (1997, Paolo Virzì)

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VITA

Brandi Leanne DeMont attended Derby High School in Derby, Kansas. In 1996 she entered the University of Kansas at Lawrence to study French and Italian. In the fall of 2000, she attended the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, where she earned a Master of Arts in Italian literature in 2002. After working in the study abroad industry for two years, she entered the Graduate School of The University of Texas at Austin in 2004 to pursue her doctoral studies in Applied Linguistics from the Foreign Language Education program. She has taught university undergraduate courses in Italian language and culture since 2000.

Permanent Address: 1107 W. Annie Street, Austin, TX 78704

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